

THE  TIMES

MAGAZINE

Supplement of the Year

13.01.18

STORM IN AN E CUP

The
fashion editor
who craved
a cleavage

CAITLIN MORAN
THE REAL REASON
I LOVE BIG HAIR

GILES COREN
I've just eaten the best
mouthful of my life


SECRET HERO OF D-DAY

By Ben Macintyre


The world's
coolest designer
(And you've never
heard of him)

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CAITLIN MORAN

Children always know how to wound their mothers. Their very presence in the world is dependent on them being perfectly fine with hurting you for up to 35 hours in the delivery ward of the Whittington Hospital, while you shout, “NO! I’VE CHANGED MY MIND! PUT IT BACK IN!”

So my children, of course, know how to inflict the deepest wound upon me. They will look up, as I come into the room, tilt their heads to the side sympathetically, and say, “Your hair looks *small* today, Mum.”

Small hair is exactly what I *don’t* want to happen to my head. Since my own birth, my primary objective has been the glorious, rampant *embiggenment* of hair – its engorgement, its enpuffenment. This is because I came of age in the Eighties, when hair began to inflate madly sideways from the head, like a porch. By 1988 – when I was 13 – the entire female cast of *Working Girl* looked like Elnett dandelions, and Krystle Carrington’s hair was the 51st state of America, spanning two separate time zones.

Then, at 16, my gigantification went up a level after a summer jag of 19th-century literature, wherein every female character spends half her life putting her hair up and making it bouffy by using pads, or “rats”. I started putting my hair up, too – I made “rats” out of a younger sibling’s terry-towel nappies, with the hair artfully brushed over them and secured. In clement weather, there was a fairly accurate representation of a noble young lady with cauldron-sized hair on her way to a ball. In a stiff wind, there was just a crying 16-year-old girl, with displaced hair revealing nappies on her head, being heckled on the 512 bus.

Eventually, the barmaid in a club took me to one side, and said, “Bab, you look nuts. Come with me. I’m going to change your life.”

She took me into the toilets. Everyone else in those toilets whose lives were being changed was taking Ecstasy. By way of contrast, my life changed when she took a comb out of her handbag, and said, “Right, love. I’m gonna teach you how to *backcomb*.”

What I came to believe as I watched her in the mirror – selecting swathes of my hair and setting about it with a comb – is what I still believe: backcombing is a practical magic. Armed with merely a comb, you can turn a handful of hair into a bolus, a cloud, a circle, a mass. It’s basically weaving – looming a new

‘Really big hair?
It changed my
life. Everyone
had to get out
of my way’



aura, like the golden glories in paintings of 16th-century saints. You’re on a mission from God, your hair suggests. You were foretold. You are to be neither impeded nor ruffled. Everyone must get out of your way. You walk taller and prouder. You stick your bosoms out like Barbara Windsor. You laugh louder. When you check the sides of it – with that classic, palms-raised pat-pat – that is the international sign language of, “F*** you. I’m fabulous.”

That was the night I realised what big hair really is: big hair is the unspoken official uniform of ambitious working-class women. That is the demograph for whom it is a perennial. Brassy hustlers. Pushy scrubbers. Bright, determined lady peasants, coming out of the council estates and council blocks, and heading for the bright lights.

No one else loves big hair as much. Middle-class women fetishize “natural”-looking hair, which secretly costs a fortune to maintain, and posh women would never dream of spending time on altering their appearance – believing the invention of the comb to be hopelessly arriviste.

But for working-class hustlers, big hair is their whole ethos, on their head. I will take up space; I will be a fantastical shape; I will defy Nature; I will be invented by me. I am practical and smart, for it is a feat of engineering to have big hair – hot tongs must be applied at the right angle, like a welding torch; pins must be inserted at vital stress points, like RSJs. The architectural blueprint of huge hair must be drafted in the head, like IM Pei sketching his glass pyramid outside the Louvre – but a glass pyramid that can withstand six hours on the dancefloor, and then a four-mile walk home in the rain.

Big hair is the most infallible of accessories – unlike jewellery or umbrellas, you can’t lose your hair on a bus or in a taxi. Big hair is a helmet that protects you from bad vibes and sarcastic jibes from lesser people – if you make your hair big enough, you can’t hear anything other than the sound of your own hair, pressing heavily on your ears. In troubled times, or walking through unhappy areas, it gives the comfort of a hawk’s hood.

And most importantly of all – for those brassic mavens, determined to swim upstream – big hair is *cheap*. When you can’t afford pearls, beautiful shoes or flattering tailoring, you can take out a 75p comb and conjure up Kubla Khan on your head. Big hair says: I am going to make more of me – out of *nothing*. ■

caitlin.moran@thetimes.co.uk

What I've learnt

Audrey Tautou

French actress and model Audrey Tautou, 41, has starred in Amélie, Priceless, The Da Vinci Code and most recently the Jacques Cousteau biopic, The Odyssey. In 2013, she was awarded the Order of Arts and Letters by President Hollande. She lives in Paris with her partner, cinema marketing director Yann Le Bourbouac'h.

I don't feel comfortable on the red carpet. In this life you have to wear a little dress; you have to wear high heels and be glamorous. It's not natural at all. As myself, I don't do any of those things. But I can't say it is a struggle or difficult or painful. It's not a big deal.

Paris is a beautiful city, but it's not where I want to be. I have lived here for 22 years, even though I don't love it. I grew up in a little town in Auvergne, in central France. I love landscape, and all I want is to live in a place where I can see the horizon.

I will never feel inferior to a man. When I was four, my mother told me what it was to have an inferiority complex. She made me feel that as women we were not underneath men. So I don't feel weak, and I have never known this problem. In *The Odyssey*, I play Jacques Cousteau's wife, Simone. She stayed in the shadow of her husband, but she was the real captain. I relate to Simone: I'm very happy when I'm not in the spotlight. That's my paradox. I love being an actress, but I can't say that I love being famous.

Becoming famous was so huge and surprising and unexpected for me. It happened so quickly. I could feel how radically my life was changing, and what I represented to people before I was famous and after was very different. I became their *fantasme*, their fantasy. Instinctively, I kept my distance; I did not want to become somebody who is not human. I have always found the power of fame and how the public could be impressed by it a little weird. I wanted to keep my freedom, to take the subway

as I used to do, but it's impossible. I take pictures of every journalist who interviews me, because I want them to understand a little of this life.

Understanding your difference is what makes you truly beautiful. But that's a very hard thing to achieve.

If you want a career in Hollywood, you have to accept the life that goes with it. I had no desire to move there and I don't want that life. I'm not looking for recognition. I'm not looking for power. I'm not looking for fame. In Hollywood, the spirit of competition is much bigger. It exists there, and in France I don't think it does. That suits me.

One of my dreams is to do a tour of the world by boat, but to do that you need time and you need a boat. I don't have either of them, but I do have an adventurous spirit.

For every kind of problem there's a solution. I learnt that from my mother.

My friends would not describe me as peaceful. There is an expression in French: *lâcher prise*. It means to let go. I'm not this type of person. I'm too much of a perfectionist. And being a perfectionist stops you from doing things. Your expectation of what you want to do is so high, you will never reach it.

When I was a child, I was un garçon manqué – a missed boy. In English I would be called a tomboy. I was always climbing trees, playing football.

Listen to your instincts with confidence. *Oh là là*, I have made a lot of mistakes by not following that advice. And I am also terrible at giving advice – particularly when it involves love.

Some people know who they are from when they are young, but others need more time. I don't know who I am. But that's the goal, the point of all life – to follow your road. ■

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INTERVIEW Monique Rivalland PORTRAIT Thomas Lavelle



'I'm not comfortable on the red carpet. I love being an actress, but I don't love being famous'

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This week I'm wearing... sack pants

BY ANNA MURPHY

Oooooh. My happy place. An absolutely humongous pair of trousers. Except – hang on a minute! – I have a waistline. That can't be right. Yet this, I have belatedly realised, is the key to the whole

business. It is fine to wear treds that are vast – not so much all-encompassing as all-obliterating – provided you are nipped in at the waist. Which is what I didn't get right when I wore sack pants in my youth.

Sack pants plus sack top equals – surprise! – sack. It seems remarkable to me that I didn't work that out when I was at university. I could bang on about Alberto Moravia ad infinitum, but I couldn't dress in such a way as to not look like a bushel of corn. I do sometimes think there are some key modules missing from our education. How to be happy. How to have a successful relationship. How not to dress like a sack of potatoes. The world would be a better place if there were GCSEs in all of the above.

I suppose I will have to fill in on the fashion angle until the national curriculum changes. And I think *Times* columnist Professor Tanya Byron covers off the other two subjects pretty well. Perhaps we should set up our own academy school together? She can do the maths, too. I will teach the three-part module on earrings. I will host the jumpsuit seminar. I will set the dissertation entitled "The rise and fall of killer heels: why no woman need ever wear them again". And I will underline repeatedly that there is such a thing as hessian chic, but only if it comes with a waist.

Sack pants were all over the catwalk for the new season. At least I think that is what they were. What with most models being so slim it can be hard to get a sense of scale. Perhaps they were just regularly proportioned trousers flapping around irregularly skinny legs.

I think it's a great look, but then I have form. Where to buy? & Other Stories has them in red (£89; stories.com), Baum und Pferdgarten in burnt orange (£149, in store from late January; baumundpferdgarten.com), Gestuz in a lateral turquoise, blush and beige stripe (£200; gestuz.com). White is another route, like Bella Freud's gorgeous Bianca pair (£420; bellafreud.com). All of the above add up to a strong style statement. I will be buying something more restrained from Me+Em, its navy and grey pinstripes (£118; meandem.com). And, at risk of overemphasis, reining it in at the waist, too. ■



Clockwise from left: Anna Murphy wears top, £34, Topshop, trousers, £315, Victoria, Victoria Beckham, shoes, £535, Manolo Blahnik, and

earrings, £95, Vanina; trousers, £89, & Other Stories; Karlie Kloss; £420, Bella Freud; £79, & Other Stories; £59.99, Mango; £118, Me+Em



SARAH CRESSWELL, REX SHUTTERSTOCK, ANNA MURPHY: STYLIST, PRUE WHITE, MAKE-UP: DANI GUINBERG AT CAROL HAYES USING CLINIQUE, HAIR: ERNESTO MONTENOVATO AT DAVID ARTISTS USING TIGI, STOCKISTS: TOPSHOP.COM; VICTORIA, VICTORIA BECKHAM, NET-A-PORTER.COM; MANOLOBLAHNIK.COM; VANINA, FENWICK OF BOND STREET; MANGO.COM

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'I crave order, but the roof leaks; the light is on the blink. Everywhere I look, I want to scream'

Most of us, unless we are rich enough to have staff, or unless we're impossible neat freaks, live with something that needs fixing. I'm talking practical here, not psychological. In an everyday irritating grit-in-the-oyster sort of way, we co-exist with a creaky door hinge, a loose handle on the fridge, a smart TV that we can't work properly, a clock in the car that resides on British summertime, intermittent wifi, an outside light that needs a new bulb, a wheelbarrow with a flat tyre, a lamp that needs a fuse, a dripping tap, buttons to sew on.

It's the plague of the little job. Stuff that – when we notice it, which is about once a day – causes us to mutter, “Must get that sorted,” and then, of course, do nothing about it. Weeks turn into months, then into years. The clocks on lots of cars never do get changed. If we're fit and able, we're either too lazy to be bothered or too busy to do anything about it. And if we're not fit or able, then we must swallow the frustration and wait until we can grab a passing someone who can fix stuff, and beg them to help us.

But it's not easy. People you pay to come and fix things only want substantial jobs and aren't interested in your fleabites, especially if they're the result of your own technological stupidity. No job too small? Yeah, right. Younger family members, although willing and able, are busy earning a living a good distance away. Their free time was never intended to be devoted to your piddly problems.

Because of my weird circumstances, precipitated into the impotence of old age while I'm still quite young, I see both sides painfully clearly. It's only 12 or so years ago that I was the fixer, when my parents went into decline and died. The sandwich generation has it tough, servicing the needs of both old and young. I well remember the burden – I'm being utterly honest here – of being at the oldies' beck and call. And now here I am, in a blink of an eye, in the same situation as my parents, bleating for help.

Once, in my forties, I imagined life was going to be free and easy for ever. I've since been on a steep learning curve. When you are



in prison, you put your family in prison too. When you are older, or in any way dependent, you trap those who love you. They can't escape from you. You can't escape from them. What you can't do is not just your problem; it is also theirs, and will be for the rest of your life.

The cruel thing is, the older you get, the more you crave order and reliability. They assume a greater importance just when you are least able to enforce them. My household has recently seen what I can only describe as a cluster*** of things to fix.

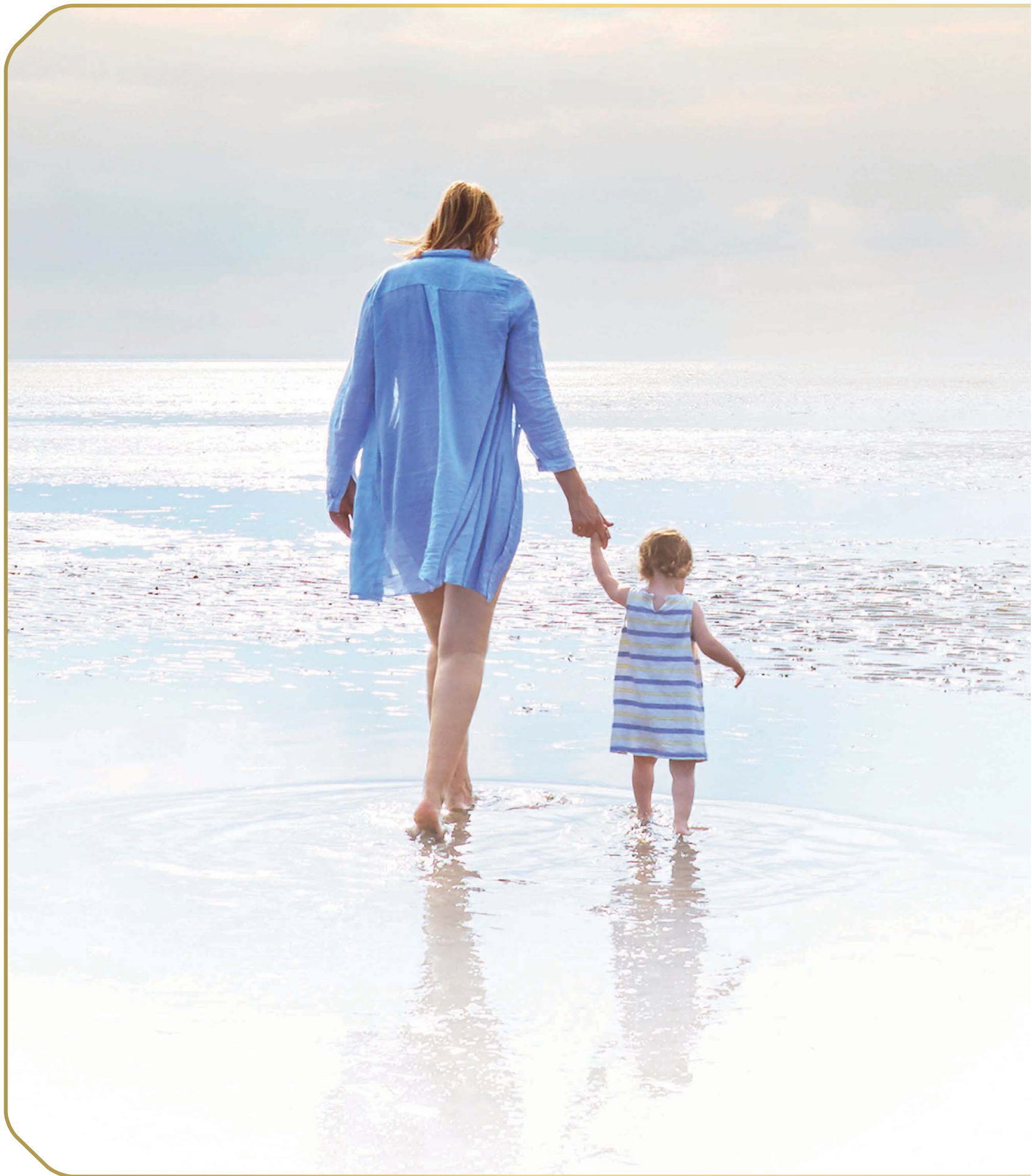
The roof in the outhouse is leaking. The fluorescent light has gone on the blink (and Dave doesn't climb ladders any more). The rollers on the barn door are broken. The wifi, overnight, operates only in one room of the house. (Why? What devilish dark magic is that?) There's a loose floorboard in the bedroom, right at the door, which people stand on every day, and it's going to collapse soon. The new dishwasher is iffy, but infuriatingly it's me, not the machine, a case

of Picnic – Problem in Chair, Not in Computer. Ditto the underfloor heating in the sunroom – it's on the wrong program and I've mislaid the instructions. There are pictures to be put back on the walls and a curtain rail has come down – two-person jobs. Everywhere I look, I want to scream.

A good friend of mine is a brilliant mechanic and handyman. He can fix anything, anywhere. Ergo, he could fill his day four times over. He'd love to find a job with less manual work. Why, I asked him, don't you take on an apprentice or three? Because no young people want to do manual work, he said. I've tried. Nobody's interested. Nobody young wants to fix anything. They just buy new.

What will become of us? I see a market niche for a kind of Uber service for 2020s home fixing, for when life starts to wear out in little ways. Remember, you read it here first. ■

Melanie Reid is tetraplegic after breaking her neck and back in a riding accident in April 2010



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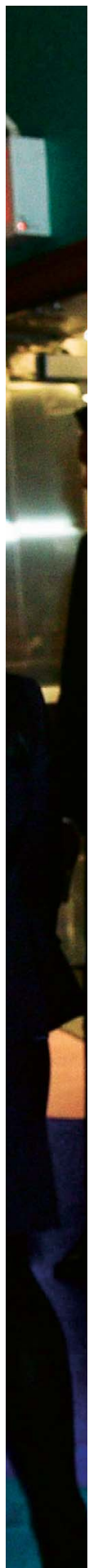
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THE COOLEST MAN IN FASHION

Bet you don't know his name



He's best mates with Kanye, DJs in his spare time and his streetwear is worn by Rihanna, Beyoncé, Justin Bieber and Bella Hadid. Now insiders say it's only a matter of time before **Virgil Abloh** takes over a top international fashion house. Interview by Hattie Crisell



Virgil Abloh, 37, with Bella Hadid last year. Opposite: Abloh photographed by Sebastian Kim



Picture a successful fashion designer 50, 20 or even 10 years ago, and you'd likely be thinking of a white man tailoring evening gowns in London or Paris. But today, one of the world's most watched, most discussed designers is a black man from Chicago, the 37-year-old son of Ghanaian immigrants. He arrived in fashion with a degree in civil engineering and another in architecture, he designs as many hooded sweatshirts as dresses, and his clothes sell out across Europe, Asia and the US at prices that might make your eyes water. By the end of 2018, he could well be heading up one of the major fashion houses – and, if so, he'll be one of the first black designers to do so.

That man is Virgil Abloh, the polymath behind the brand Off-White. If you'd heard of him five years ago, it would most likely have been in connection with Kanye West – Abloh has been on the rapper's team as a creative consultant since 2002, with input into everything from sets to tour merchandise (“We’re still very close,” he says). But it was in December 2013 that he launched Off-White, taking the American street style born of Nineties hip-hop and throwing it straight into the polished, expensive world of high fashion.

Four years later, Abloh's reputation within that industry has grown exponentially and outstripped that of his famous friend (West has his own clothing brand, Yeezy). Off-White's designs are worn by a flock of A-listers, mainly of the type we follow in our millions via Instagram: Rihanna, Kendall and Kylie Jenner, Kim Kardashian, Beyoncé, Justin Bieber, Bella Hadid, Joan Smalls, Solange Knowles. In 2015, Abloh was the only American finalist for the prestigious LVMH Prize for designers. Industry bible *businessoffashion.com* says that Off-White's sales grew 100 per cent from 2015 to 2016 (although the company refuses to confirm that figure). Abloh has collaborated with Nike, Moncler and Jimmy Choo and is soon to launch a collection with Ikea. In 2019, there will be an exhibition of his work at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago.

His latest womenswear show, which took place in September and cited Diana, Princess of Wales, as its surprising muse, was the most exciting of Paris Fashion Week. It was closed by Naomi Campbell, dressed in a sharply tailored, ruffled white blazer and Off-White-logged cycling shorts. If you think it's typical for her to make an appearance for a four-year-old brand, you'd be mistaken. “When Naomi walked out, people were cheering and clapping, and they did it again when she came out with Virgil,” recalls Lauren Indvik, head of news and features at *Vogue International*. “It felt like a real moment of arrival. It was hard to

He takes 300 flights a year. ‘DJing taught me to multitask. Relaxing isn’t my natural pace’

believe that, just two years before, he was doing small runway shows with some white cut-out T-shirts and deconstructed Levi's.” Previously, the industry had been interested; now, it is on the edge of its front-row seat.

Abloh is a tall, handsome man. He speaks in a Chicago drawl, chooses his words carefully, and bats away topics he doesn't want to discuss. He answers next to nothing about West, though he will confirm a tale I've read about how they met: Abloh located the graphics shop in Chicago where the rapper printed his merchandise, dropped off some of his own designs incorporating the logo of West's record label, and persuaded the shop's manager to show West's team. He was working for him within a month. In 2009, they interned at Fendi together, and later both received mentoring from the esteemed Central Saint Martins professor Louise Wilson. But that's about it for Abloh's formal industry education. “Streetwear is my fashion school,” he says.

That genre's printed hoodies, trainers and graphic T-shirts were the starting point for the brand, for both men and women. “What I was responding to was the unisex feeling that was happening at the time – like girls wearing clothes from their boyfriend's closet,” he recalls. “So, the first seasons were like that: making menswear for women and adding a few signifiers that it was womenswear. That's what I was recording at the time.”

“Recording” is a very Abloh word, as is “cataloguing”. The designer talks about all of his work, from fashion design to album artwork (he was nominated for a Grammy for the Jay-Z and Kanye West album *Watch the Throne*) to DJing (which he does under the name Flat White), as a lifelong intellectual project – his response to what he sees around him. “I don't

measure my work as a success or failure – it's a journal,” he says. “If I didn't get these ideas out, I would only be doing a disservice to myself. It's the life of a creator.” He requests and keeps recordings of every interview too, with the idea that they will eventually constitute an archive of his ideas at every stage of his career. “I've often thought if you could go back to John Galliano in his third year of starting and listen to what his exact thoughts were at that time, that would be interesting for the future.”

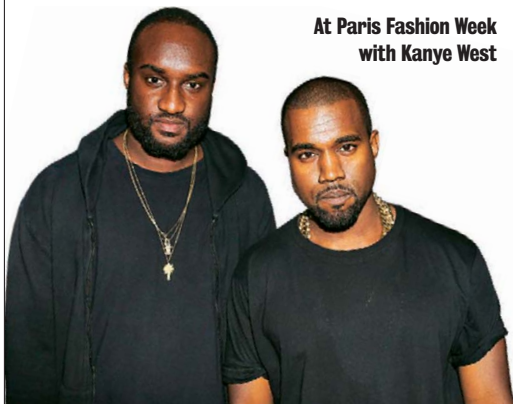
The fact that he doesn't hesitate to make a comparison with Galliano – the star designer who, before a fall from grace in 2011, headed up Dior and now designs for Maison Margiela – says something about fashion in 2018. At no previous point in history would Abloh have risen so stratospherically to the helm of a globally successful brand with the full attention of the industry.

His triumph is a product of several things converging at once. Most obviously, there has been a collective movement away from formality: men can now wear trainers and sweatshirts in contexts where shiny black shoes and a blazer would once have been de rigueur. Off-White is one of the brands that has enabled casual streetwear to climb into the luxury bracket; another is the New York label Supreme, one of Abloh's inspirations, which recently did a sell-out collaboration with Louis Vuitton. Soon afterwards, it's rumoured, investment firm the Carlyle Group took a roughly 50 per cent share of Supreme for \$500 million (around £370 million). Not bad for a label that sells logo T-shirts.

Then there's the cult of celebrity: Abloh's starry connections got his name circulating before he had even launched his company. Another factor is the increasingly urgent feeling within fashion that people of colour need to be better represented (and beyond that, that they may be the only ones able to lead the industry out of creative stagnation). You can see it in the recent appointment of Edward Enninful (also the son of Ghanaians) as editor of *Vogue*, and the placement of the British Fashion Council's model of the year, Adwoa Aboah, on that magazine's cover.

Abloh also argues that Instagram has been crucial to his success. “I think I might be one of the first luxury brands burst from that platform. I made Off-White from that, I made it thinking about it – it was the only way for anyone to know about the brand. It wasn't going to be through pages in a magazine. Had it been five years earlier without social media, I don't think I would have had the platform I have.” He and Off-White have 3.7 million Instagram followers between them.

There are a couple of magic ingredients particular to Abloh, of course. One is his understanding of the culture around him. “Virgil really captures the zeitgeist in all his projects,



At Paris Fashion Week
with Kanye West



With Naomi Campbell
at Off-White's show,
Paris, September 2017

which is what makes him important outside the fashion industry, too," says Ida Petersson, Browns' womenswear buying director. "He has an effortless sense of what's going on and applies this across fashion, art and music."

When I ask Abloh how he sees Off-White evolving, he refers me to a lyric by the musician Mos Def: "You know what's gonna happen with hip-hop?/ Whatever's happening with us." In other words, art should take its lead from life. "The future of fashion is going on what the people are doing, and that's why streetwear is relevant," he says. Although he rarely speaks about politics, his work can be political. For his menswear presentation last June, he teamed up with the artist Jenny Holzer. Onto the backdrop behind the models, they projected heartwrenching poems by Anna Swirszczynska, a volunteer nurse during the Warsaw Uprising against Nazi occupation in 1944. He told a journalist the collection was inspired by "oceans and borders and life rafts, and how many people die trying just to get from one place to another".

His other great strength is boundless energy. His "typical African parents" wanted him to be an engineer, hence his first degree. ("They're still not certain exactly what it is I'm doing, but they're happy," he says with a laugh.) On the side, he started to work as a DJ. "The DJing was just as important to me then as school was supposed to be. It taught me how to multitask, how to get three things done on time at the same time, and do it in a certain way."

Abloh is married to his high-school girlfriend, Shannon, and they have two children aged 4 and 1, yet he takes around 300 flights a year, whether that's to perform in Las Vegas or to visit Off-White's office in Milan. How

I want teens to know they can do it from their bedroom; they don't have to go to fashion school

does he manage a personal life? "It's easy," he replies, as though baffled by the question. "This is how I work. This is how I've always been. I dedicate every day to being creative and thinking and working. Vacations are foreign to me. Relaxing isn't my natural pace." Is your wife the same? "I don't know that many people are the same," he says.

His goal is to run a major fashion house – to join the ranks of designers such as Maria Grazia Chiuri, Olivier Rousteing or Demna Gvasalia, who've revamped Dior, Balmain and Balenciaga. It looks possible, too; in the past year, rumours have connected him to Givenchy and Versace. Even if he hadn't spoken of his ambition in interviews, it is shouting from his work. His September womenswear show was a leap into a new sophistication.

"At that point, we knew what to expect of Off-White: deconstructed denim mainly, and reworked basics such as tees and hoodies, often plastered with the logo," says *Vogue's* Indvik. "I remember walking into his studio two days before the show and seeing these tremendous tulle ballgowns in soft pastels, with enormous ruffled skirts, and a mood board that was all Princess Diana – it was really unexpected." You had to look again to clock Abloh's trademark streetwear touch: the tough

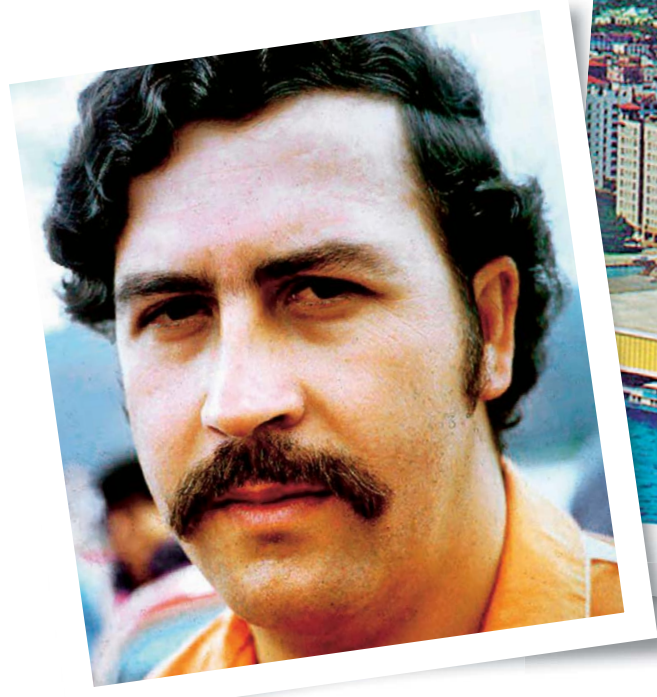
stiletto boots, the T-shirts, the trainers, the sports socks, the loose black leather trousers.

He won't name the luxury brands that he most admires – it wouldn't be very diplomatic – but says, "I think the ones that are resonating, the ones you see on the street that people are adopting and wearing, are a marker of what's working." He is almost certainly thinking of Balenciaga, the 98-year-old Paris fashion house which, under the creative direction of Georgian designer Gvasalia, is now selling offbeat sweatshirts and trainers that have attracted an army of young fans. It's the same ethos as Abloh's own brand and, indeed, he has DJed at one of Gvasalia's aftershow parties.

While Off-White has just launched an affordable-ish capsule collection, For All, which includes T-shirts for \$95 (around £70), equivalent pieces in the main line cost around £230. A new-season varsity jacket costs £2,691. Isn't there something a bit hypocritical, I ask, about taking fashion ideas from working-class kids and turning them into something that sells for hundreds or indeed thousands of pounds? "Off-White is definitely a contradiction," he allows. "It's the new attitude of a luxury brand. But when I do a collaboration with my friends at a skate shop in LA called Babylon, that shirt's \$30. My collaboration with Ikea will be at Ikea prices. I take over 300 flights a year specifically because I'm contributing to the culture that makes streetwear. Kids are more likely to catch me on a street corner in Mexico City DJing at a small party than being far removed in some studio. So I get it if people say, 'Streetwear is our thing and it shouldn't be in a luxury space,' but those questions are more aimed for other brands, not this one."

His success is likely to open doors for younger people – other designers of colour, anyone who doesn't come from the narrow, privileged world traditionally associated with fashion. "I probably wouldn't have done this interview if I didn't think 17-year-olds would read it and be like, 'Wait, I don't have to go to fashion school. I have good ideas, I'm articulating my culture in my little brand and, from my bedroom, I can possibly end up successful, too,'" he says. "To me, it's a way of paying back for the culture that made me. We were talking about streetwear kids feeling like, 'Why is this shirt \$300?' The larger picture is that you can do it, too. There's no golden ticket."

Abloh may never have been given a golden ticket, but he's worked his way to a point where the heavy doors of a long-established fashion house could swing open for him. Still, I suggest, bringing his dynamic, always flying, working-with-the-kids approach to one of those unmovable behemoths would be a whole new challenge. "I'm not demotivated by how difficult it could be," he says dismissively. "I'm inspired by how awesome it could be." ■



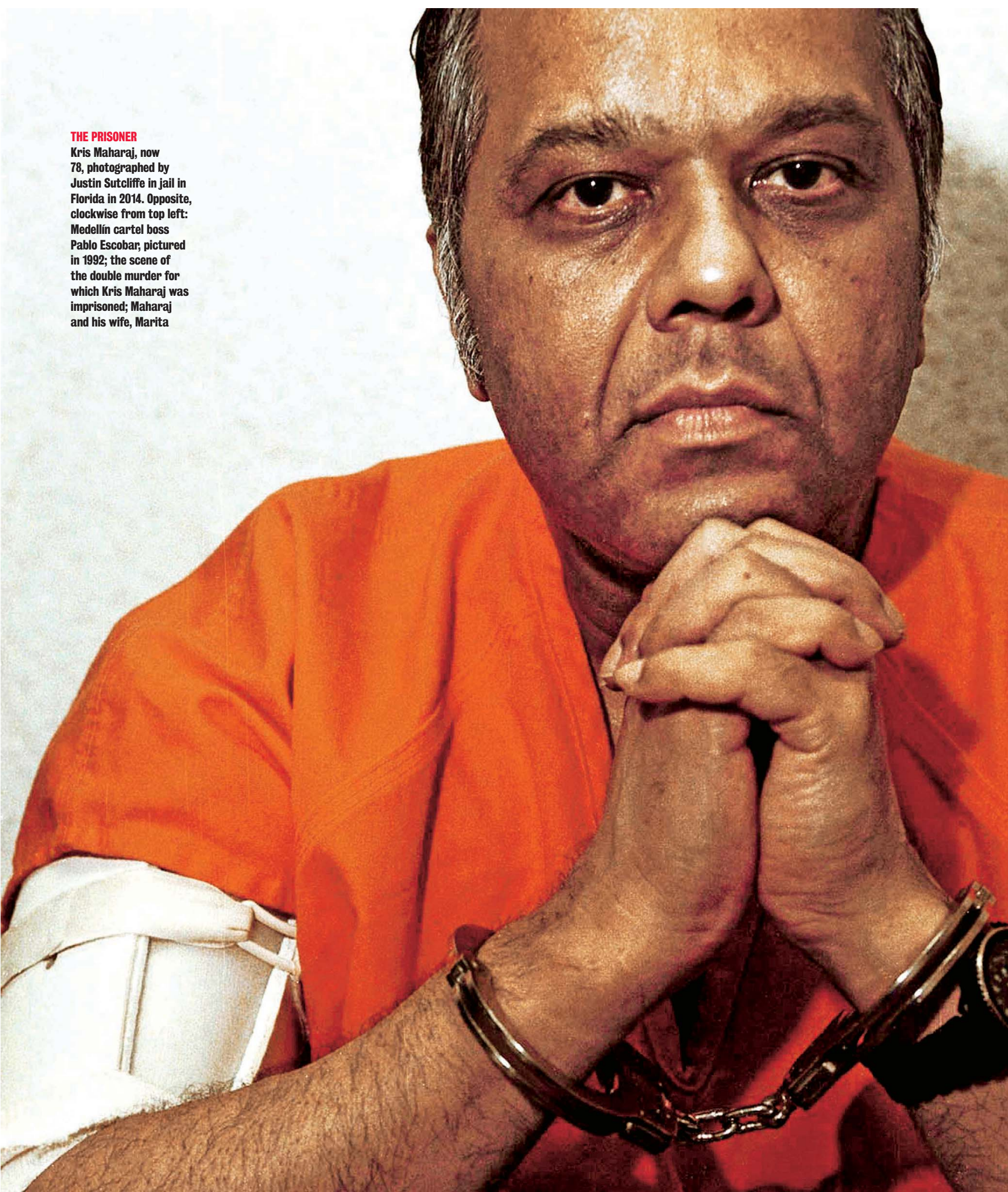
In 1987, British millionaire **Kris Maharaj** was sentenced to life in prison for the murder of two businessmen in Miami. The motive? An unpaid debt of \$400,000. After three decades in America's top-security jails and narrowly escaping death row, new evidence suggests that he was framed – by the infamous drug lord **Pablo Escobar**. *Guy Davies reports*

**IN JAIL FOR
31 YEARS.
BUT IS HE
INNOCENT?**



THE PRISONER

Kris Maharaj, now 78, photographed by Justin Sutcliffe in jail in Florida in 2014. Opposite, clockwise from top left: Medellín cartel boss Pablo Escobar, pictured in 1992; the scene of the double murder for which Kris Maharaj was imprisoned; Maharaj and his wife, Marita



Chances are you've not heard of a millionaire British businessman called Kris Maharaj. He used to pit racehorses against the Queen's, give generously to charity and throw lavish parties for high-society London in the Seventies. You almost definitely won't know of his former business associates, the Miami-based father and son Derrick and Duane Moo Young. But Pablo Escobar? Everybody knows him. The richest criminal in history. The "king of cocaine".

Of these four men, only Kris Maharaj is still alive, although he came very close to dying in the state of Florida's electric chair. The story that binds them together is one of murder and revenge at the heart of the biggest drugs empire the world has ever seen. It is also a tale of rampant police corruption and possibly one of the greatest miscarriages of justice in American legal history.

On October 16, 1986, Derrick and Duane Moo Young were gunned down in room 1215 of the Dupont Plaza Hotel in downtown Miami. Derrick was shot six times. Duane was shot once through the head, execution-style. Kris Maharaj, a Trinidadian-born food importer who had been at the hotel for a business meeting unconnected with the Moo Youngs on the morning of the murder, was arrested later that day and, after a brief trial, sentenced to death. He spent the next 15 years contemplating his fate on death row, until in 2002 his double-murder sentence was commuted to life imprisonment. He has never wavered from protesting his innocence in the 31 years he has been locked up in Florida's high-security prisons.

Early this year, Maharaj's defence team, led by the UK-based human-rights charity Reprieve, will hear from a federal judge whether or not he will be granted a retrial based on the discovery of new evidence that could exonerate him. It is a story awash with killers, gangsters and embezzlers; the case as compelling as it is complicated. But it hinges on one proposition: that Kris Maharaj was framed for murder by the world's most dangerous drugs cartel.

At his murder trial in 1987, prosecution attorney John Kastrenakes argued that Kris Maharaj murdered Derrick and Duane Moo Young over a real-estate deal gone bad. The Moo Youngs owed Maharaj \$400,000 (then around £280,000) – motive established. The prosecution also provided a witness to the crime: Neville Butler, a part-time journalist who had been recently employed at the *Caribbean Times*, a Florida expat newspaper owned by Maharaj. Butler claimed he had been forced at gunpoint by his former boss to tie up the Moo Youngs with a length of

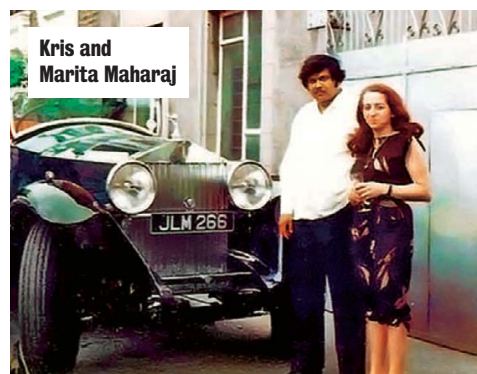
electric cord. He had then stood by helplessly as Maharaj shot the father and son dead.

The lead detective in the case, John Buhrmaster, testified that, under questioning, Maharaj claimed never to have been inside the Dupont Plaza, yet his fingerprints were all over the bloodstained room 1215. Furthermore, the detective said he had lied about owning a pistol. In this way, Maharaj, who had no prior criminal convictions, was portrayed as a liar with the means and the motive to commit murder.

But closer examination of the evidence tells a different story. First, there was the motive. It's true that the Moo Youngs owed Maharaj money. But at the time of the murder, he was in the process of recovering the debt by suing the Moo Youngs in the civil court.

Then there was the evidence of the prosecution's star witness, Neville Butler. He was full of contradictions, failed a polygraph test and changed his story a number of times. Butler said Maharaj accused him of being involved with the Moo Youngs in the dodgy property deal and had blackmailed him into kidnapping them. But at the trial, he claimed to have forgotten this. Astonishingly, as the cracks in Butler's testimony began to break open, Maharaj's attorney, Eric Hendon, sat passively on the sidelines. Hendon failed to press home the question that any halfway competent defence lawyer should have asked: namely, why did Maharaj – an apparently cold-hearted murderer – let Butler, a man he'd accused of helping to rip him off, survive as an eyewitness to a double murder?

Further still, Maharaj had a perfectly sound explanation as to why his fingerprints were at the murder scene. He had attended a business meeting, set up by Butler himself, at the Dupont Plaza on the morning of the murders. He had agreed to meet a man named Eddie Dames in room 1215 to discuss the paper he owned; Butler said Dames could distribute the *Caribbean Times* in the Bahamas. Dames failed to show up, so after an hour of waiting, Maharaj left the hotel, well before 10am. He drove to Fort Lauderdale, where six



THE VICTIMS



independent witnesses confirm he spent the rest of the morning.

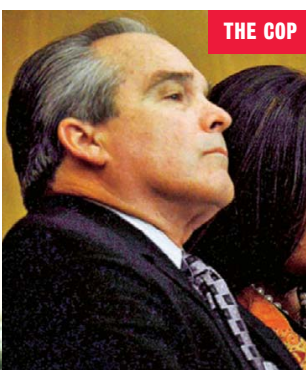
The shooting did not take place until noon – by which time Maharaj was having lunch at Tarks restaurant 30 miles away. Yet the defence called none of the witnesses. Maharaj, unlike Butler, passed a polygraph test confirming his version of events.

The trial was a shambles from the start. The first judge assigned to the case was arrested after three days for soliciting bribes. Years later, the new defence team proved that the second judge met secretly with the prosecution to draw up the order to execute Maharaj before judicial sentencing had begun.

Today, however, Kris Maharaj is still marooned in judicial limbo. Since his arrest 31 years ago, he has appealed countless times against his conviction. So often rebuffed by the intractable American appeal courts, in 2001, the British lawyers of Reprieve convinced the Miami court that Maharaj had not received a fair trial in 1987. They did not clear him, but they succeeded in taking the now penniless Briton off death row. He remains in prison to this day, and that is where he would undoubtedly stay for the rest of his life – were it not for extraordinary new evidence unearthed by a British lawyer deep in the heart of cocaine country.

For more than 20 years, Kris Maharaj's British lawyer – Clive Stafford Smith, founder of Reprieve – has followed a trail that has led him all the way from the appeal courts of Florida to Medellín, the drugs capital of Colombia. It led him directly to the man he claims to be the real mastermind behind the Moo Young murders: the cocaine king himself, Pablo Escobar.

In Colombia last year, Maharaj's legal team tracked down a former Medellín cartel gangster with an astonishing story to tell. Jhon Jairo Velásquez Vásquez, known by his gang name "Popeye", had handed himself over to the police in 1992 after confessing to involvement in a staggering 3,500 murders as one of Escobar's leading hitmen. He was



THE COP



'Maharaj had nothing to do with it. They owed Pablo Escobar money. He was mad at them'



THE CARTEL ASSASSIN

released from prison in 2014, having served a 22-year sentence for multiple murder.

A year later, Popeye told the British lawyers, "As a lieutenant of Pablo Escobar Gaviria, with whom I worked shoulder to shoulder, he told me directly that they [the Moo Youngs] had stolen his money and that of his partners and therefore 'they had to die.'" Popeye was totally unaware of Maharaj's conviction for the murder; the former hitman said he was driven to make this disclosure by a desire to clear his conscience.

After Popeye's statement in 2015, Reprieve tracked down other former Medellín cartel members, who corroborated his testimony. Among them was Pablo Escobar's brother, Roberto Escobar, along with a former CIA agent and one of the cartel's drug pilots, who confirmed that Juan Carlos Ortiz Escobar, an assassin nicknamed Cuchilla (which translates as "the Blade") and Pablo and Roberto's nephew, had

Clockwise from far left: Duane and Derrick Moo Young; John Buhrmaster, the lead detective on the case; Kris Maharaj

in prison in 1987; Pablo Escobar with one of his principal hitmen, Jhon Jairo Velásquez Vásquez, aka Popeye (also inset)

been dispatched to Florida in the summer of 1986 on a special mission. The details of his assignment remain unclear. However, another cartel member known as Choncho (real name Jorge Maya) – who, according to former Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) agent Henry Cuervo, was Escobar's enforcer in Miami – believes it was revenge: "One thing I can say with 100 per cent certainty is that your man Maharaj had nothing to do with their murder. The Moo Youngs owed Pablo Escobar money. Pablo Escobar was mad at them."

There's more. Stafford Smith and his team now contend the Miami Police Department was actively involved in framing Maharaj. Shortly before his trial in 1987, a cartel member called Jaime Vallejo Mejia was indicted for his involvement in Escobar's cocaine trade. On October 16, 1986, Mejia was staying in room 1214 of the Dupont Plaza – the room right across the corridor from the murder scene. The cartel owned the 12th floor – no other room was occupied.

Police found a blood smear on the door of room 1214. At Maharaj's original trial, John Buhrmaster, the lead detective in the Moo Young case, told the court he considered Mejia to be "legit". When asked of the nature of Mejia's import-export business, the detective merely said, "I don't recall." Mejia was never investigated as a suspect. He was under indictment for his role as a Medellín cartel boss at the time of the murder trial, but nobody told the defence.

Appeal after appeal has been rejected by the state and federal authorities. In 2007, at an unsuccessful clemency hearing, Derrick Moo Young's daughter, Shaula-Ann Nagel, said, "It's all been hashed out before. It's a waste of tax dollars." The prosecution has since dismissed the Escobar connection as "fantastical". In 2014, the American news network CNN, covering yet another failed appeal, dismissed it as being akin to a far-fetched plot on a cheap Eighties TV cop show.

It's true that the framing of Kris Maharaj might have made for a decent subplot in *Narcos*, the hit Netflix drama documenting Escobar's rise and fall. The Moo Youngs would likely have had only a bit part in such a drama. Yet their role in handling the cartel's finances goes a long way to explaining

their bloody double murder. The Moo Youngs were money launderers.

By 1989, the cartel supplied 80 per cent of America's cocaine imports, bringing in billions of dollars a year. Escobar's influence reached the uppermost echelons of Colombian political society. In 1982, he was elected to the Chamber of Representatives as part of the Liberal Alternative movement – despite widespread knowledge of his role in the drugs trade. His power reached a semi-divine magnitude. "Sometimes I am God," Escobar once said. "If I say a man dies, he dies that same day."

In 1987, the year of Maharaj's conviction, Escobar made the very first *Forbes* billionaires list. His estimated net worth was \$3 billion. According to Javier Peña, one of the DEA agents responsible for hunting down Escobar, a kilogram of cocaine would cost around \$5,000 to refine and import to Miami. At the time of Kris Maharaj's arrest, dealers in the city could sell that same kilo for somewhere between \$50,000 and \$70,000. Peña estimated that the crime syndicate flew 6 planes, carrying 500kg each, into the US, Mexico and the Caribbean every day. More than two thirds of the US-bound product ended up in the Miami area.

The scale of the drug smuggling had to be matched by the cartel's money-laundering operations. The chief problem for any cartel was how to get its cash profits back from the US. Initially, the Medellín cartel was reluctant to involve non-Colombians, but in the early Eighties they cast the net wider in order to find viable launderers. This is where the Dupont Plaza murder victims, Duane and Derrick Moo Young, come in.

The father and son duo were recruited for the job of handling the cartel's drug money. No doubt all too aware of the particular dangers of their line of work, between August 7 and October 16, 1986, they took out more than \$3 million worth of life-insurance policies.

Working to prove Maharaj's innocence, Clive Stafford Smith solicited the pro bono help of London-based forensic accountant Laura Snook to investigate the Moo Youngs' finances. Buried deep within the files, she discovered they had been skimming 1 per cent off the drugs money they handled by manipulating interest rates – 1 per cent may not sound like much, but with such vast sums to play with, it amounted to millions. Steal a dollar, let alone a million, from the world's most ruthless billionaire and you earn an immediate death sentence.

Despite their cartel connection, the Moo Youngs were depicted at Maharaj's trial in 1987 as legitimate businessmen. The jury was therefore never in a position to weigh up the most important question: in

what was then the murder capital of the USA, with a Medellín-fuelled homicide rate three times the national average, which was the more likely – that Kris Maharaj, a relatively small-time businessmen with no criminal history, murdered a father and his son over the \$400,000 they owed him rather than wait for the outcome of due legal process, or that they were executed on the orders of a ruthless drug kingpin once he'd discovered they had been double-crossing him?

So why was it that Kris Maharaj, a British businessman, took the fall for the Moo Young killings? It would seem he made the perfect patsy because of the \$400,000 he was owed. This simple fact, however, leaves many unanswered questions.

Let us review the evidence. Reprieve's examination of the 1986 police files shows that John Buhrmaster lied about the supposed murder weapon. Maharaj had admitted he once owned a pistol, but said it had been stolen from him months before the crime. The gun was never produced in evidence, rendering an exact ballistics report on the bullets used in the crime impossible. The evidence that sent Maharaj down was purely circumstantial. The same detective lied about the crucial fingerprints found at the scene – his partner admitted under oath that Maharaj explained why he had been in room 1215 on the morning of the murder when he was first questioned by the authorities. It is worth noting that there were 19 other unmatched prints in the hotel room. Maharaj's version of events has never changed, unlike that of the prosecution's lead witness, Neville Butler, who was undisputedly involved in the murders, but never served a single day in prison because he testified for the prosecution.

Maharaj had an innocent explanation for the prints found in room 1215. During the trial, he was so incensed by the loaded evidence, he exclaimed, "I'm probably the only one in this court who told the truth from the very beginning to Detective Buhrmaster." Then there is the evidence of Popeye, who said the Moo Youngs had been killed on the orders of Escobar. The cartel members have held nothing back. Their willingness to come forward begs the question: why did their operation not once feature in the original criminal investigation?

The answer, in no small measure, lies in systematic police corruption. Continual outbreaks of rioting and violence made life dangerous for the Miami Police Department in the late Seventies. The number of those willing to serve as lawmen quickly plummeted after the notorious "Cocaine Cowboy" shoot-out of 1979, in which two gunmen executed a Colombia-based trafficker and his bodyguard in Dadeland Mall in broad daylight. Action had

to be taken. The federal government panicked and responded with a massive recruitment drive, the consequences of which were far-reaching. Corners were cut and officers not properly vetted before being sent out to patrol the nation's most dangerous city.

The gangs, at the height of their power in the mid-Eighties, "owned" Miami. There is a solid body of evidence that supports such claims. Among the officers indicted for drug offences was Raúl Martínez, ironically the head of the Police Anti-Corruption Unit.

This was exactly the kind of chaos in which Escobar and his associates thrived. In Eighties Miami, his wealth bought incomparable influence. The cartel was untouchable. In the narcotics trade,

Police corruption was endemic. The lead detective lied about the supposed murder weapon and about the crucial fingerprints

murder and corruption were two sides of the same coin. The drugs war was the perfect environment in which to enact his business philosophy, which he exploited to full effect in the Miami-Dade County Police Department (MDPD): "Everyone has a price – the important thing is to find out what it is."

Ten days before the Moo Young murders, the Miami Police Captain Judith Bennett wrote in the *Los Angeles Times* about police officers on the make: "We're not just talking about taking bribes or giving protection to criminals – they themselves stole the drugs. They were thugs, operating under a whole different set of rules." Stafford Smith's research into this state of affairs is now crucial to Maharaj's chances of freedom. One source from within the MDPD, former officer Michael Flynn, came forward to testify that he had heard Officer Pete Romero, Detective Buhrmaster's partner, say that the police had "gotta hook this guy up" – MDPD slang for framing someone.

Flynn said the corrupt elements of law enforcement had a deal with the cartel. When the "narcos" wanted someone dead, an officer would be dispatched to the scene to ensure they did not get into trouble. This happened in the Moo Young murders, he says. Perhaps the most shocking element of the Maharaj case is the absence of an official inquest into these allegations of police corruption.

However, resources are rarely available to investigate malpractice by law enforcement,

and Reprieve itself is a small organisation, largely dependent on individual donors. Between January 1985 and November 1987, 72 officers were suspended or fired for acts of misconduct – almost 10 per cent of the total force. This number may only have scratched the surface of how many were involved in the cartel conspiracy. After all, for simply turning a blind eye to a car full of drugs, they could earn a year's salary.

The current body of evidence, the confessions of Medellín cartel members and the anarchic context of Miami's drugs war strongly suggest the involvement of both local police and the cartel in the murder of the Moo Youngs. But Maharaj is still in jail, paying the price – 31 years of his life for being in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Kris Maharaj is once again pushing for a retrial. The case will move back to Miami in the coming months. The date has not been set, but a single federal judge will hear the new evidence. The former millionaire is now penniless, allowed outside for two hours a day and permitted a five-minute weekly phone call to his wife, Marita. But still they dare to hope. "All I have to celebrate is the love of my wife," he says. "With her, even this half-life is worth living."

Stafford Smith told me that winning over the court of public opinion was crucial in stubborn cases such as this one. Last August, Maharaj spoke to Adrian Chiles on BBC Radio 5 Live of his "horrifying" ordeal, giving much needed publicity to his cause. Reprieve is now preparing to solicit the support of MPs to intervene in Florida as *amicus curiae* – literally, "friends of the court", who are not parties to an action, but advise the court regarding a point of law or a fact directly concerning a lawsuit. It hopes this will improve the prospects of a retrial.

All the while, Maharaj has been growing older and frailer. Now 78, he is mostly confined to a wheelchair in the prison yard because of his battle with necrotising fasciitis, a flesh-eating infection, for which he was denied much needed early medical attention. Stafford Smith attributes the onset of the disease to the "horrific" sanitation conditions at Maharaj's current jail, the grim South Florida Reception Center. Three men in a row who slept in one sordid prison bed, including Maharaj, ended up in hospital with the same bacteria, as did the patient in the bed next to his. Throughout the ordeal, Marita has waited anxiously for his return to the small cottage she rents nearby. She relies on friends to help pay the bills. This Christmas just gone, like every Christmas for the past 30 years, she laid an extra place at the table, in the hope that her husband will one day sit down with her again to eat. ■

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NEPTUNE

‘Can I still be a feminist and have a boob job?’

A week after her breast operation **Stacey Duguid** was sobbing in her surgeon's waiting room. But the former Elle fashion editor (now 32E) claims going under the knife was worth it – even if she'll never fit into a designer sample size again

PORTRAITS Dan Kennedy **STYLING** Prue White



Stacey Duguid, 43, wears
dress, £1,599, Victoria Beckham
(harrods.com); earrings,
£212, Katerina Makriyianni
(net-a-porter.com)



A MOST
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The morning after the British Fashion Awards last month, I lay in bed with a thudding hangover. The night before played on a loop in my mind like a ludicrous scene from *Zoolander*. The drama and excitement of a star-studded fashion event had been overshadowed by one thing, or, rather, two things: my tits. Gripped

by the Martini Fear (not an actual diagnosis, but still, bloody awful), I penned an imaginary letter of resignation to the industry I've worked in for two decades, then texted my boyfriend from bed, "We need to leave London, today." "You OK?" he texts back from the kitchen below. "Not really. The entire fashion industry touched my new breasts last night. I'm retraining to be a vet."

New tits? Yup, I've had a boob job, hence wearing a skintight dress by cool, London-based fashion label Preen to the British Fashion Awards. Although the dress has long sleeves, is high-necked and swishes right down to the ground, it is way out of the ordinary when it comes to "What Stacey Wears to a Fashion Event". Usually swamped in swathes of well-cut fabric, in that avant-garde way only fashion people can get away with, I've never considered wearing a tight-fitting dress to a fashion event before. But with my new, slightly bigger, way, way, way higher breasts, tight clothes suddenly look a lot better than the baggy, buttoned-up ensembles I've worn for decades. Like two mythical mountains, a veritable Buddha tummy you stroke for good luck, my cleavage was out and proud.

"They're the size of your head!"

shrieked someone.

"OMG, they're amazing in our dress. I love the way the seam cuts through the cleavage," said Justin Thornton, one half of the husband and wife design team behind Preen.

"I never thought I'd be 'that' woman who has a boob job," I giggled to shoe designer Rupert Sanderson, slightly apologetically, feeling naughty, while simultaneously swallowing a mild pang of regret. Am I raunchy, or just plain ridiculous?

The last time I saw the fash pack was at London Fashion Week a few months before, back when my bangers were a modest 32D. At a push (zero carbs for a week), I could fit into a designer sample, a godsend when you need something new to wear and the old bank account is empty. Now a 32E, I doubt I'll ever fit into samples again. Bang goes my new-season wardrobe and bang goes my fashion credibility. Except, what about Gisele Bündchen's glorious rack? Still a fashion magazine favourite and arguably the ultimate Victoria's Secret "Angel", didn't she allegedly have a boob job in 2015, a retirement gift to herself? And what of the recent fashion



BEFORE



AFTER TWO DAYS THE PAIN HITS. I TELL MY CHILDREN, 'MUMMY'S HURT HER ARM'

moment when the original supermodels – Naomi Campbell, Cindy Crawford, Carla Bruni, Helena Christensen and Claudia Schiffer – walked the Versace catwalk? An epic display of grown-up beauty. The sight of Helena's gloriously silky breasts spilling from a golden Versace gown was pure fashion magic.

But who am I kidding? The reality is that young, flat-chested models will always prevail because (mostly male) designers claim the clothes look better on them.

"Big tits are back," said no one in fashion, ever.

Fair enough, I haven't exactly spent my whole life praying for a Jayne Mansfield chest

Stacey Duguid in July 2016 and March 2011

either. I came of age in the Nineties, a decade of "We'll drink you under the table" ladettes. Only strippers had silicon breasts back then; the rest of us were happy with our perky little nuggets that looked good under slip dresses and T-shirts. But after having two kids back-to-back in my late thirties, it all went wrong. Which is why, aged 43, I took my breasts, which slipped beneath my armpits when I lay down, along with my gnawed-on nipples to Dr Dan Marsh of the Plastic Surgery Group in Harley Street in London.

"Every mum has these, right?" I blurt by way of introduction to my droopy boobage, while wishing I'd remembered to pluck my nipples. After a load of research, I chose Dr Marsh because I fancied his newly launched "secret boob job". In a procedure that costs a modest £4,900, an implant is inserted into the breast via a plastic funnel, meaning the scar is only 3cm long, and the recovery time is around one week. Ta-da! New tits by lunchtime! Except not for me. Dr Dan, as I begin calling him by the end of our first appointment, tells me in a quiet voice, "We'll need to do a little lift." An understatement if ever I heard one.

At the second appointment, I try on a medical bra with several gel breast implants stuffed into each cup. "Whoa, too big," I spurt, suddenly panicked at the thought of never owning the must-have dress of the season. A floral number by The Vampire's Wife, the hot label set up by Susie Bick, Nick Cave's wife, is sitting in my Liberty virtual shopping basket. "Pass the smallest implants you have. I have a tiny bodiced dress to squeeze into." Dr Dan measures across the top of my boobs to determine the size of the implant. And that's when I discover I have "wide breasts". Just when I thought it couldn't get worse.

"Can you be a feminist and have a boob job?" I text my extremely smart Harvard/Oxford-educated sister-in-law. I am in Pret A Manger, where I'm attempting to recover from the shock of having wide tits. I wait for a bombardment of "don't do it" warnings. A message blinks on my iPhone. "I think the fundamental value of feminism is that all individuals must be respected and valued, and that means respecting their decisions. Assuming they had the surgery for themselves and not because of the male gaze." I high-five the phone and chew a calorific Pret Bar to celebrate.

Male gaze? That reminds me, must tell the Boyfriend. Given he's about to be the Husband at some point in 2018, he should probably know I'm about to have a boob job. He's in the final throes of his post-doctorate studies and

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we've been putting off getting married until he's a fully qualified counselling psychologist. (Handy.) I've also never been able to envisage myself walking down an aisle in a white, "I'm still a virgin" Alice Temperley dress. Being given "away" by a man to another man sounds so terribly old-fashioned. Although saying that, I bet the new breasts will look great in white ...

After two further appointments, Dr Dan and I decide upon the second-smallest gel implant and, before I know it, I'm in a bed at the Highgate Private Hospital. Given they were once the secret weapons beneath my blouse, the thing I loved most about my body, I say thank you to my boobs for all the good times as I'm whisked off to theatre. An implant and lift later and it's all over in less than two hours. In recovery, a man groans in the bed next to me, not at the sight of my bandaged-up Georgie Bests, but something to do with his penis. I feel vain, but too high to care. Pass the morphine.

Two days later, the pain really hits hard. The implant has been inserted halfway under the muscle, and I lie in bed feeling as though someone has punched me hard in the chest. My six-year-old son and four-year-old daughter look freaked out. They start scribbling "get well soon, Mummy" cards covered in red and pink love hearts. I feel awful seeing their worried little faces and tell them, "Mummy's hurt her arm." I lie there feeling like a terrible mother and wonder if I should call my own. I did tell my mum about the operation, but didn't tell her when it was, because I didn't want her to worry. I also didn't want any sympathy.

Taking up camp in the spare bedroom, I prop myself upright against an old maternity pillow. I survey the scene – my bruised, mutilated body, the inability to climb out of bed unaided, my children's love notes – and begin to wonder: how would I feel if my daughter had cosmetic surgery? That's when I begin to spiral. How would I also feel if she went off the rails at art school, had tattoos, liked bad boys? "Must be the drugs," I tell myself. I begin to weep for all the drama I ever put my mother through.

Three days after the op and I'm scared to look, but more scared not to. I undo my surgical bra gingerly and take a peek at my swollen, bruised and bloodied breasts, then gasp, close the bra and vow not to peek for another week. They are huge and swollen and totally unrecognisable. "How are they?" texts a friend. "I look like Crackhead Barbie," I reply. There are "anchor scars", where my breasts have been cut, reshaped, skin removed and lifted. My nipples have been removed and sewn on much higher and a thin bloody line runs from the lower centre edge of each nipple, ending at the smiley scars beneath each breast.

One day, but not today, I'm sure I'll appreciate the fact the gel implants have been

AFTER



I'VE FLASHED MY NEW BREASTS TO EVERYONE. SHOULD I INSTAGRAM THEM?

inserted half-beneath the muscle to give a more natural look, because who wants to look as though they have two cricket balls stuck beneath the skin's surface, an instant giveaway on the beach? Not me. Placing an implant under the muscle equals more pain and more recovery time, but still, how I scoffed when Dr Dan told me it would take two weeks to begin to feel better. I am, after all, Ms Invincible. Tell that to the woman who, on day four, desperate for someone to wash her greasy hair, attempted to leave the house but couldn't get her shoes on. Tell that to the woman who, smashed on co-codamol, wearing Céline sunglasses in the rain, shuffled to the shops looking like Diana Dors. People stepped out of my way, assuming I'd been let out of rehab too early.

A week after surgery, I go into town to see Dr Dan for a check-up. Sitting in the waiting room, I begin to cry. The woman behind the desk turns off the TV and passes me a tissue and a glass of water. It's the general anaesthetic, I tell myself, as I try to visualise the big-boobed Lara Stone, the sight of whom stomping down the Prada catwalk several years back, braless, two glorious baseball-boobs bouncing up and down in her see-through top, had the fashion press whipped up into a frenzy. But I'm not a model. I'm a 43-year-old mother of two who's risked surgery because she hates her tits. I cry some more. "Two weeks is the turning point," says Dr Dan upon seeing my tear-stained face. Not quite believing him, I take a taxi home

and put myself to bed with a series of podcasts and some peppermint tea.

He is right, of course. Two weeks after the operation, I feel so much better and am finally able to get out of bed unassisted and without swearing. The mums at the school gate greet me like a long-lost friend. "Hi, where've you been?" "I had a boob job!"

Three weeks after surgery, there isn't a mother at the school gate who hasn't copped a feel. One has even booked an appointment with Dr Dan after taking a look in the local coffee-shop loo. I've flashed my new tits in cupboards, back gardens, offices and pubs. I even lifted my dress at a girls' lunch as my mates sat open-mouthed in awe. "You should be really happy with them," said one particularly startled friend.

Want to see my new breasts? Should I Instagram them? In a world of hush-hush surgery, am I being ironic? I can't tell, but the soon-to-be husband reckons it's my way of dealing with "new-boob anxiety". Given his profession, he's probably right.

I know having a boob job isn't very "fashion"; in fact, it's the opposite of a "fashion" thing to do. Ironic given that the women who actually buy designer clothes love and celebrate their bodies in sexy dresses that make them look decades younger than their years. I reckon I sit somewhere in the middle of the two camps. My new breasts turned out better than I could have imagined. There is hardly any scarring and the pain went at three weeks, but I'm not sure I'll be flashing my décolletage in a low-cut dress this summer. But I don't know if I'll stick to my old, buttoned-up style either. (I had to go up a size in my Vampire's Wife dress, thanks to a massive amount of boob-squish in the size 10, btw.) I'm sure my fashion identity crisis will pass, and I doubt I'll be retraining as a vet any day soon. Although life would be less complicated in blue scrubs.

I sometimes gaze down at my stupendous rack and think, am I really a bad feminist? I didn't do it for my boyfriend, or any bloke for that matter. I did it for me. I did it because I was sick of looking away from the mirror when I took off my bra at night. I did it because I'd lost my mojo post-kids and wanted to look and feel better in clothes. Admittedly, I feel guilty when I think of friends who've had cancer, for whom the operation was not a choice but their only hope of survival. On a bad day, the inner critic cranks up. "You're old, you're vain and you should be ashamed."

No, I'm only halfway through my life. I did it for me and I should probably start wearing low-cut tops immediately. ■

Just in case you're tempted: danmarsh.co.uk. Secret boob job, £4,900; lift and implant, £7,900; lift, no implant, £5,600

THE REAL McMAFIA HOW I EXPOSED THE RISE OF THE



MOSCOW 1991 A food supply queue

Money laundering, violence and power — Misha Glenny, the writer behind the

OLIGARCH AND A NEW WORLD OF GLOBAL CRIME



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Although shocking, terrifying and threatening, Moscow in the early Nineties was also exhilarating – unless you got on the wrong end of a bullet. By 1993, when I made a visit, the shootings had begun, the knockout prostitutes were already soliciting in public with equanimity, the most exotic food and expensive wines were being piled high in the restaurants catering for the New Russians, the casino lights dazzled at night.

The collapse of the Soviet Union is the single most important cause of the exponential growth in organised crime that we have seen around the world in the last two decades. Almost overnight, it provoked a chaotic scramble for riches and survival. From the bitter wars of the Caucasus to the lethal shoot-outs in towns and cities, this was a deadly environment as a new class of capitalist exploited the vacuum of power by seizing whole industries and raiding the state coffers. Accompanied by an orgy of consumption and decadent behaviour, the like of which was last witnessed a century ago under Tsar Nicholas, it sucked almost every citizen into its vortex of violence. Even the KGB and the Red Army quickly became embroiled in this spectacular nightmare, whose repercussions travelled well beyond the Soviet Union's borders into all continents of the world, as money poured out of the country in the search for safe havens. Throbbing at the heart of these extraordinary events was Moscow.

I had been visiting the Soviet capital since the early Seventies, and was always struck by how joyless it seemed. Now it was unrecognisable – even since my last visit in 1991. The grandiose buildings were the same, but the sudden energy and the suppurating wealth were too much to grasp. This was a fantasy Russia. I spent an evening at a new restaurant, eating food that would have garnered Michelin stars. I was flabbergasted by each mouthful, simply unable to conceive that this was indeed the reinforced-black-breaded and watery-souped Moscow that I remembered. Only the overweening brusqueness and a cheerful indifference to anything non-Russian remained constant.

In two years, Moscow had been transformed into a breathtaking Babylon of guns, enterprise, money, violence and fun.

General Vladimir Rushaylo shook his head and smiled sympathetically at the businessman sitting opposite him.

"I can't pick him up, Artyom Mikhailovich."

"And why not?"

"For one thing, nobody's issued a directive telling me to, nor has anyone paid us to do so. And secondly, unless he were caught redhanded, then we'll have to carry out a long and tedious investigation, which would probably lead absolutely nowhere."

The head of Moscow's Anti-Organised Crime Unit, Rushaylo was apologetic, but couldn't see that it was any of his men's business to get

James Norton (standing) and the cast of *McMafia*



mixed up in this case. "When he shoots you or kidnaps you," one of Rushaylo's subordinates chipped in helpfully, "then we'll go after him!"

Artyom Mikhailovich Tarasov understood the message clearly enough: blood on the pavement was sometimes enough to get the cops involved. But threats? If the overstretched police had investigated mere threats in the bewildering circus that was Russia in the early Nineties, then they'd have had no time for anything else. Tarasov sighed. It seemed that he must continue unaided his uncomfortable dispute with a former business partner who was demanding a payoff of several million dollars. He was just one among tens of thousands of Russians targeted by an extortion racket.

Looking back, Tarasov believes he was blessed with naivety. "Sharks only move in for the kill when they can taste the fear of their victims," he mused, "and I don't believe I understood quite how serious things were with the gangsters at this time, so I wasn't as scared as perhaps I should have been."

Tarasov's affable manner belies his exceptional business acumen, which

**IN TWO YEARS, MOSCOW
BECAME A BREATHTAKING
BABYLON OF GUNS,
ENTERPRISE, MONEY,
VIOLENCE AND FUN**

transformed him from communist bureaucrat into Russia's first millionaire after Gorbachev's reforms had opened a window on private enterprise in 1988.

"Our first business was fixing Western television sets. There were no spare parts, so we had to improvise with Russian ones. And they worked – although if people had looked inside their sets, they would have seen a rather monstrous apparition. After that I started a dating agency. I made thousands of dollars in a single week, but the police closed it down almost immediately for supposed immorality. It dawned on me that the market for these services was enormous."

In 1988, Gorbachev introduced a Law on Co-operatives, which permitted characters such as Tarasov to set up a business in Russia for the first time in 60 years. Entrepreneurs discovered that as soon as a business was up, running and making money, it attracted competition. "And rivals would employ any method to muscle their way into your market," he explained, "including violence."

Appealing to the police for protection was futile. As General Rushaylo's frankness in conversation with Tarasov demonstrated, the police (traditionally the imposing front line of the Russian state's authority) were giving up the ghost. They had neither the intellectual nor the financial resources to adapt to the emergence of capitalism. And so the state, slowly but momentously, started to concede its monopoly on violence to the so-called *gruppировки* or street gangs. But far from being harbingers of anarchy, these groups of men – Afghan veterans, street toughs, martial-arts experts, former KGB officers, and every one of them terrifying – were the indispensable midwives of capitalism.

Businessmen such as Tarasov appreciated that the *gruppировки* were in fact privatised law-enforcement agencies. Instead of paying taxes to the state (which had no idea how to tax the new small-scale private enterprise), businesses willingly handed over 10-30 per cent of their turnover to local thugs, who would ensure in exchange that they could continue trading, free from the violence of *gruppировки* working on behalf of their competitors. "We are prepared to work with the racket because it charges 10 per cent," a businessman from Omsk noted at the time. "The state takes 90 per cent in taxes and even more in fines."

Continues on page 44



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THE  TIMES

Eat!

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15-MINUTE VEGAN

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RECIPES
Katy Beskow
Moroccan
flatbread pizzas,
page 39

Just a few years ago, veganism was viewed with suspicion, and still the butt of endless jokes about brown rice and sandals, but suddenly it's cool. Whether for health, ethical or environmental reasons, anyone who is anyone is at least talking about cutting out meat and dairy.

Beyoncé, Lewis Hamilton and Novak Djokovic led the celebrity pack, but there are said to be more than half a million vegans in this country, nearly four times more than a decade ago, and most of them aged under 34.

Veganism has its own websites, it has its own restaurants, it has its own month – the excruciatingly named Veganuary – and, of course, it has its own cookbooks. Lots and lots of cookbooks. But what sets Katy Beskow's *15 Minute Vegan Comfort Food* apart is that it hits head-on the standard put-down that preparing plant-based food is time-consuming and the results taste bland.

“Vegan cooking is easy when you step out of the ‘meat and two veg’ way of thinking,” she says. “There’s no limit to what you can create, with familiar kitchen equipment and no specialist cookery skills required.”

Armed with a few widely available dairy alternatives such as almond milk, soya yoghurt and coconut cream, and a whole lot of healthy vegetables and pulses, she sets about creating the kind of dishes that will have even meat-eaters coming back for more.

All recipes serve four unless otherwise stated



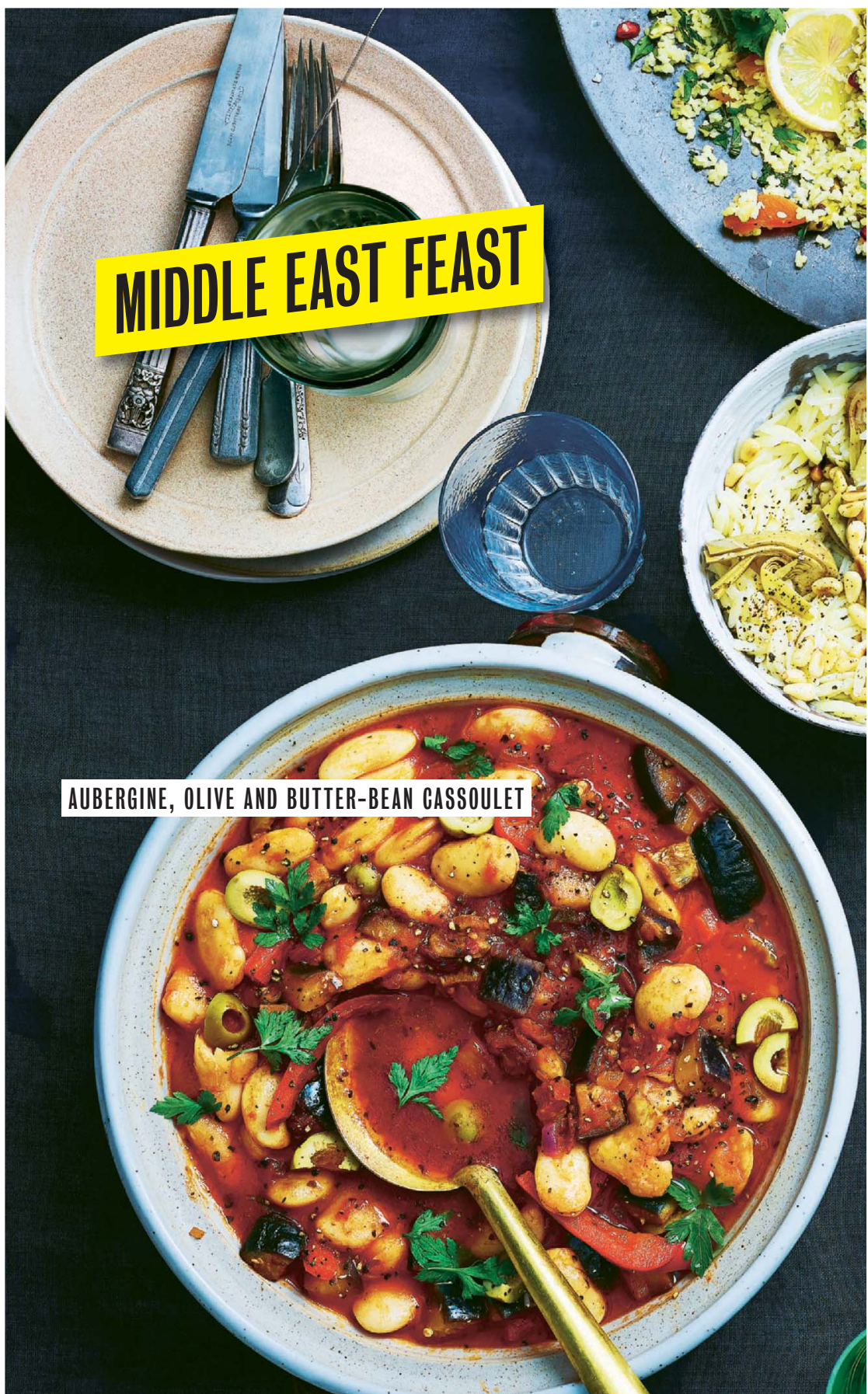
GRILLED COURGETTES WITH DILL YOGHURT

• 4 medium courgettes, sliced into long 2cm-thick strips • Extra virgin olive oil • 4 rounded tbsp unsweetened soya yoghurt • 1 tbsp dill, finely chopped • Juice of half an unwaxed lemon • Pinch of sea salt • 1 tsp capers

1 Heat a griddle pan over a high heat while you brush the courgette strips with extra virgin olive oil. Place the strips onto the hot pan and cook for 3-4 minutes until defined “charred” lines begin to show. Flip them over and cook on the other side for 3-4 minutes.
2 In the meantime, make the yoghurt dressing. Combine the soya yoghurt, dill, lemon juice and sea salt in a small bowl and set aside to chill until ready to serve.
3 When the courgettes are grilled on both sides, arrange them on a serving plate and scatter over the capers. Generously spoon over the dressing just before serving. ➡

MIDDLE EAST FEAST

AUBERGINE, OLIVE AND BUTTER-BEAN CASSOULET





APRICOT, PISTACHIO AND MINT PILAF

PAN-FRIED CRISPY CHICKPEAS

GRILLED COURGETTES WITH DILL YOGHURT

ARTICHOKE AND PINE-NUT ORZO

PHOTOGRAPHS
Dan Jones

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DAY 2: Take the train to the seaside village of Orrio for a breathtaking coastal walk all the way to Zarautz, with its sweeping bay, where we'll enjoy a traditional Basque seafood lunch accompanied by Txakoli, a local white wine. We return to San Sebastian by train for dinner at a local restaurant.

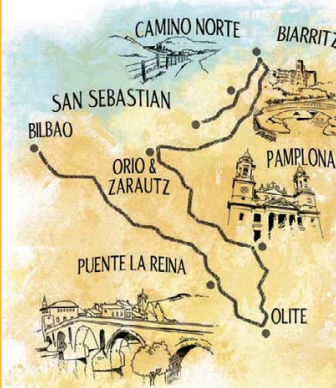


DAY 3: Nip over the border into French Basque country to visit Biarritz, once the favoured resort of Napoleon III. Our local guide will help you explore the old town with its art deco and Belle Epoque buildings and beautiful promenade. After lunch it's back to San Sebastian with a stop at St-Jean-de-Luz.

DAY 4: From Pasajes San Pedro, a short ferry ride brings us to Donibane. Visit Victor Hugo's house and enjoy a promenade stroll before returning to San Sebastian for an afternoon guided walk.

DAY 5: We travel inland saying goodbye to the Bay of Biscay and hello to Pamplona in the Kingdom of Navarra. This ancient Roman city, dominated by the cathedral of Santa Maria, was a favourite haunt of Hemingway. You'll walk in his footsteps along its winding old streets, followed by dinner.

DAY 6: Off to Olite, home of the Navarra wine region and former royal residence of the Kings of Navarra. Enjoy a visit of the town, a winery stop, then a visit to the Royal Palace.



DAY 7: We visit the tiny Romanesque Ermita de Santa Maria de Eunate and walk part of the Camino de Santiago which takes us to the pilgrimage town of Puente La Reina, to explore the town and its famous bridge. We'll have time to further explore Pamplona before dinner.

DAY 8: We transfer back to Bilbao with a guided visit to the renowned Guggenheim Museum before our flight back to London.

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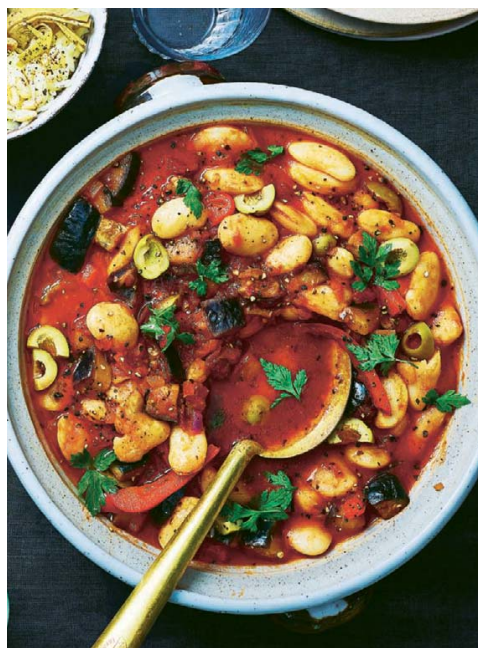
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AUBERGINE, OLIVE AND BUTTER-BEAN CASSOULET (above)

• 2 tbsp olive oil • 1 large aubergine, cut into bite-sized cubes • 1 tsp dried oregano • 1 tsp dried mixed herbs • ½ tsp ground cinnamon • 1 red onion, finely diced • 1 red pepper, sliced • 400g tin chopped tomatoes • 1 tbsp tomato ketchup • 2 tbsp green olives • 400g tin butter beans, drained and rinsed • Sea salt • Handful of fresh flat-leaf parsley, roughly chopped

1 Heat the olive oil in a large saucepan over a high heat, then add the aubergine, oregano, mixed herbs and cinnamon. Cook for 3 minutes, stirring frequently.
2 Add the onion and red pepper, and cook for a further 2 minutes until the onion begins to soften.
3 Add the tomatoes, ketchup, olives, butter beans and 150ml water. Reduce the heat to medium, partially cover with a lid and simmer for 10 minutes, stirring occasionally.
4 Season to taste with sea salt and scatter over the parsley just before serving.

PAN-FRIED CRISPY CHICKPEAS (above, right)

• 4 tbsp olive oil • 400g tin chickpeas, drained and rinsed • 1 tbsp smoked paprika • 1 tsp dried chilli flakes • ½ tsp ground cumin • Pinch of sea salt

1 Heat the olive oil in a large frying pan over a medium heat and cook the chickpeas for



10 minutes until they start to become crispy.
2 Scatter over the smoked paprika, chilli flakes, cumin and sea salt, and stir through for 2 minutes.
3 Remove from the heat and allow to cool for a couple of minutes before serving.

ARTICHOKE AND PINE-NUT ORZO

• 300g egg-free orzo pasta • 4 tbsp pine nuts • 4 tbsp extra virgin olive oil • 1 tsp cider vinegar • Zest and juice of 1 unwaxed lemon • Sea salt and black pepper • 4 jarred grilled artichokes in oil, drained and roughly chopped

1 Bring a medium pan of water to the boil over a medium heat, add the orzo and cook for 7-8 minutes until al dente.
2 Toast the pine nuts in a dry frying pan for 2-3 minutes until golden, then set aside.
3 In a bowl, whisk together the olive oil, cider vinegar, lemon zest and juice to make a dressing. Season with sea salt and black pepper to taste.
4 Drain the orzo thoroughly. Stir through the artichokes and pour over the dressing. Stir well to combine. Scatter with the toasted pine nuts before serving.

APRICOT, PISTACHIO AND MINT PILAF

• 100g bulgur wheat • Generous handful of mint leaves, finely chopped • Generous handful of flat-leaf parsley, finely chopped • 15 soft dried apricots, finely chopped • 3 tbsp shelled pistachios, roughly chopped



• Extra virgin olive oil • 1 unwaxed lemon, sliced • Generous pinch of sea salt

1 Place the bulgur wheat in a small bowl and pour over enough boiling water to cover. Place a plate over the bowl to form a seal and aid absorption of the water into the wheat. Leave to stand for 10 minutes.
2 Spoon the bulgur wheat into a large bowl and stir in the chopped mint, parsley, apricots and pistachios.
3 Drizzle generously with extra virgin olive oil, stir in the lemon slices and sea salt, and mix until combined.

MOROCCAN FLATBREAD PIZZA Serves 1 (above, middle)

• 1 tbsp olive oil • 1 large onion, finely sliced • 1 tbsp tomato purée • 2 tsp harissa • 1 large flatbread • Generous handful of baby spinach leaves • Extra virgin olive oil • 1 rounded tbsp pine nuts • 1 tbsp pomegranate seeds • Small handful of flat-leaf parsley, roughly torn • Juice of an unwaxed lemon quarter

1 Preheat the oven to 200C/Gas 6. Heat the olive oil in a frying pan over a medium-high heat and cook the onion for 8 minutes until golden and softened.
2 Mix together the tomato purée and harissa. Place the flatbread on a baking tray and spread over the spicy tomato mixture.
3 Scatter over the spinach leaves, then drizzle with extra virgin olive oil. Spoon over the onion and scatter over the pine nuts.
4 Bake for 5-6 minutes, then scatter over the pomegranate seeds and parsley. Squeeze over a little lemon juice before serving. ➔

GARDEN BIRYANI

- 1 tbsp sunflower oil • 1 onion, finely chopped • Half a small cauliflower, broken into florets
- 12 green beans, trimmed
- 1 yellow pepper, finely sliced
- 2 tbsp medium curry paste
- 1 tsp turmeric • 1 tsp ground cumin • ½ tsp dried chilli flakes • 400g basmati rice
- 1 litre hot vegetable stock
- 2 tbsp frozen peas
- 2 tbsp roasted cashews
- Juice of 1 unwaxed lemon
- Handful of coriander, roughly torn • 1 red chilli, deseeded, finely sliced
- Generous pinch of sea salt

1 Heat the sunflower oil in a large saucepan over a medium-high heat and cook the onion for 1 minute until it begins to soften.

2 Add the cauliflower, green beans and yellow pepper, and sauté for a further 2-3 minutes. Spoon in the curry paste, turmeric, cumin and chilli flakes, and stir to coat the vegetables.

3 Pour in the basmati rice and vegetable stock. Simmer over a medium heat for 9 minutes, stirring frequently.

4 Stir through the peas and cashews, and cook for a further minute.

5 Remove from the heat and squeeze over the lemon juice. Scatter over the coriander, sliced chilli and sea salt just before serving.

BOMBAY POTATOES

- 3 tbsp sunflower oil • 1 tsp mustard seeds • 1 tsp turmeric
- ½ tsp chilli powder • ½ tsp paprika • ½ tsp ground cardamom • 300g tin new potatoes, drained, rinsed and halved • 6 tomatoes, quartered • 1 green chilli, deseeded and finely sliced
- Small handful of coriander, roughly chopped • Pinch of sea salt

1 Heat the sunflower oil in a frying pan over a medium-high heat for 2 minutes, then fry the

mustard seeds until they start to brown. Stir in the turmeric, chilli powder, paprika and cardamom until combined into a hot, flavoured oil.

2 Carefully stir in the potatoes and coat in the oil. Cook for 5 minutes until they are hot, then remove from the heat.

3 Stir through the tomatoes and sliced chilli to coat them in the oil mixture. Scatter over the coriander and sea salt just before serving.

COCONUT, CUCUMBER AND MINT RAITA

- 8 tbsp chilled unsweetened coconut yoghurt • Quarter of a cucumber, finely chopped
- Handful of mint leaves, finely chopped • Juice of 1 unwaxed lime • Sea salt

Spoon the coconut yoghurt into a large bowl. Stir in the cucumber, mint and lime juice. Season with sea salt to taste.

MANGO, RADISH AND LIME SALSA

- 1 mango, cut into small chunks • 6 radishes, quartered
- Handful of flat-leaf parsley, finely chopped • Juice of 1 unwaxed lime

Combine the mango chunks, radish quarters and chopped parsley in a bowl. Squeeze over the lime juice. Allow to stand for 10 minutes before serving.

NAAN CHIPS

- 6 milk-free naan breads, cut into triangles • ½ tsp dried chilli flakes • Drizzle of olive oil • Pinch of smoked sea salt

Preheat the oven to 200C/ Gas 6. Place the naan triangles on a baking tray, scatter over the chilli flakes, drizzle with olive oil and bake for 8-10 minutes until golden and crisp. Scatter with smoked sea salt before serving. ➡

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BOMBAY POTATOES

MANGO, RADISH AND LIME SALSA



NAAN CHIPS

GARDEN BIRYANI

COCONUT, CUCUMBER AND MINT RAITA



MOUSSAKA BOWLS

- 1 tbsp olive oil, plus extra for brushing
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 1 clove garlic, crushed
- ½ tsp ground cinnamon
- ½ tsp smoked paprika
- ½ tsp dried oregano
- 400g tin chopped tomatoes
- 400g tin green lentils, drained and rinsed
- 1 tsp yeast extract
- 2 aubergines, sliced into 1cm rounds
- 2 tsp olive oil
- 4 large tomatoes, halved
- 8 tbsp unsweetened soya yoghurt
- Fresh nutmeg
- Sea salt
- Handful of flat-leaf parsley, roughly torn

1 Heat 1 tbsp olive oil in a large saucepan over a medium-high heat and cook the onion for 2-3 minutes until softened but not browned. Add the garlic, cinnamon, smoked paprika and oregano, and cook for 1 minute, stirring constantly.

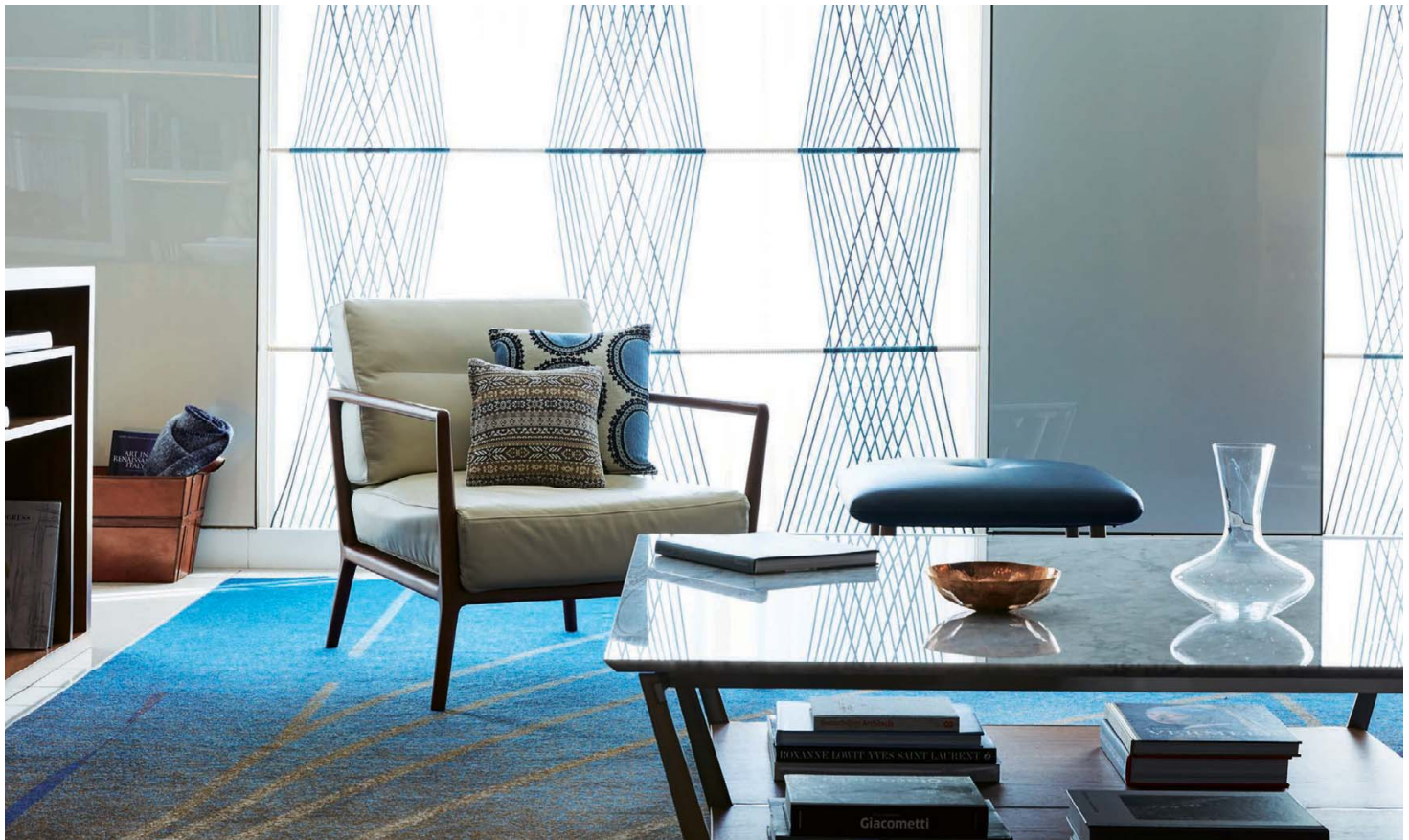
2 Pour in the chopped tomatoes and lentils, and add the yeast extract. Simmer for 10 minutes.

3 In the meantime, heat a griddle pan until hot. Brush the aubergine slices with a little oil and place on the hot pan, cooking them for 2-3 minutes on each side until softened and griddle-marked. Griddle the tomato halves for 1 minute, cut-side down.

4 Spoon the lentils into bowls and top with the aubergine slices and tomato halves. Spoon over the yoghurt and grate over some nutmeg. Season to taste with sea salt and scatter over the parsley. ■

Extracted from
*15 Minute Vegan
Comfort Food*
by Katy Beskow,
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The emergence of the protection rackets was the first phase of a three-stage development that saw Russian organised crime steer a passage from petty-criminal origins to its position as a powerful transnational force that sought a fixed berth within the global economy.

With the state in collapse, the security forces overwhelmed and unable to police contract law, Tarasov explained that co-operating with the criminal culture was the only option. Above all, he stressed, most businessmen had to find themselves a reliable *krysha* under the leadership of an effective *vor*.

The words *krysha* and *vor* are as essential to understanding the Russia of the Nineties as glasnost and perestroika were to the Gorbachev era. *Krysha* literally means “roof” and is the Russian word for a protection agency or racket. The *vor-v-zakone* is a term that originated in the prisons of the Soviet period. It means thief-in-law, and refers to those criminal (as opposed to political) prisoners who were “crowned” leaders by their peers. The *vory* were subject to a peculiar code of behaviour (they were not supposed to marry, for example), while subordinates considered their word final in the resolution of disputes between prisoners.

“Most of the *vory* were also run by the KGB, whether knowingly or not,” according to Peter Grynenco, a New York cop who specialised in Russian organised crime before

And until the winter of 1991, it was indeed very tame stuff. The mob was largely a collection of inchoate street gangs, who still had to watch their backs for the cops and the KGB. However, the latter suffered a huge blow to their prestige and room for manoeuvre with the failure of the hardline coup in August 1991 that saw Gorbachev toppled in favour of an even more ambitious reformer – Boris Yeltsin. It was not long before Yeltsin was moving beyond even the most radical of his youthful team of disciples by announcing that on the eve of January 1, 1992, the Russian government would free all prices (with some crucial exceptions). With this single act, 70 years of centralist discipline, where the writ of the state penetrated the dustiest nooks of people’s lives, went into hibernation for a decade. It took just months for Russia to descend into a surreal anarchic capitalism, the Wild East.

The pilots of Yeltsin’s self-styled “kamikaze cabinet” were two young economists, Yegor Gaidar and Anatoly Chubais.

Price liberalisation, a dry economic term, was the starting gun for a rollercoaster ride into the unknown. For the American economists and advisers who swarmed to the government in Moscow, this was a unique opportunity. Russia’s economy became a giant Petri dish of Chicago School market

Moscow as an intermediary. When it came to settling the contract, foreign companies did not deal directly with the individual enterprises that were buying or selling. The ministry would buy from the diamond mines or oil fields in Siberia at the subsidised prices, for example \$1 a barrel of oil. It would then sell on to the foreign buyers at the price of diamonds or oil on the global market, pocketing the difference and channelling the profits back into the state coffers.

The coupling of a privatised foreign-trade mechanism with the retention of rock-bottom subsidised commodity prices gave birth within months to an entirely new species of robber baron – the Russian oligarch. The logic of this life form is simple: buy Siberian oil for \$1 a barrel and sell it for \$30 in the Baltic states and before long you become a very, very rich citizen. The state was no longer getting its cut from the deal. Instead that vast profit was going to a few individuals.

Within a matter of four years, a group of several hundred fabulously wealthy men and women had evolved, while an inner clique of megabillionaires formed a cortex that exercised ever more decisive political influence over Yeltsin. Between the oligarchs and tens of millions who had fallen into penury stood a small, fragile and exasperated middle class.

SUDDENLY, YOU CAN BUY SIBERIAN OIL FOR \$1 A BARREL AND SELL IT FOR \$30 IN THE BALTIC STATES. BEFORE LONG, YOU BECOME A VERY, VERY RICH CITIZEN

setting up his own consultancy in Latvia. It was a means, Grynenco explained, by which the state monitored and controlled the criminal world, both inside and outside prison.

Some of the *vory* were tough, but others were there just for show. When the largest Slav protection racket in Moscow, the Solntsevo Brotherhood, was first emerging as a force in 1991, they invited a *vor*, Dzhemal Khachidze, to join them. Nominally, he was supposed to be Solntsevo’s boss, but he brought little to the party apart from his status as a *vor*. “This guy is a drunk and a drug addict, but they clean him up and teach him how to use a knife and fork, although they don’t get him off the coke,” said Bobby Levinson, who ran the FBI’s Russian Organised Crime desk in the Nineties. “And he begins to control the narcotics dealers on a protection-racket basis.” The *vory* proved useful marketing for nascent protection rackets, but they were not necessarily effective operatives. “All they’d ever done was sit around in prison being *vory*,” Grynenco said. “None of them had actually done any serious killing or anything like that.”

economics, but among the cultures they were busy cultivating was a Frankenstein’s monster that slipped out through the door of their laboratory almost unnoticed.

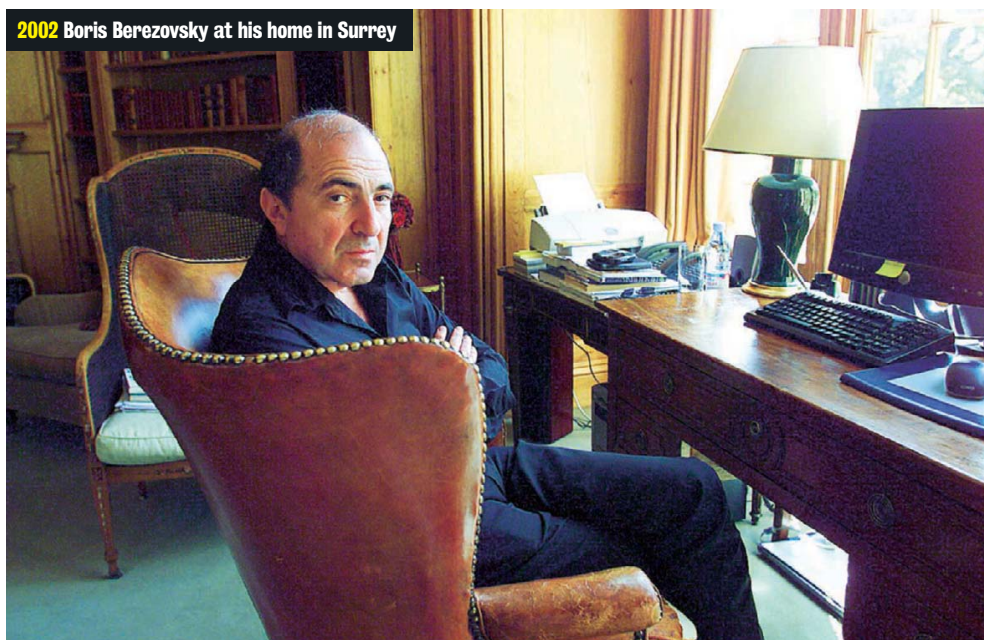
This was partly because the reforms contained a number of catastrophic anomalies. The prices that mattered to millions of ordinary Russians – namely, bread and rents – were liberalised, while those prices that mattered to a tiny enterprising minority were not. In what Gaidar once referred to with gentle understatement as “a mistake”, the reform team inexplicably held down the prices of Russia’s vast natural resources – oil, gas, diamonds and metals. A new class of traders could still buy these commodities at the old Soviet subsidised price, often as much as 40 times cheaper than the world market value. This was a licence to print money.

At the same time, the government agreed to privatise the state monopoly that the Soviet Union had imposed on the import and export of all goods and commodities. This monopoly compelled foreign companies to conduct their business with the Foreign Trade Ministry in

This process of enrichment was quite simply the grandest larceny of all time and stands no historical comparison. As the International Monetary Fund shovelled billions into Russia to stabilise the economy and prop up the rouble, the oligarchs sent even larger sums to obscure banks in every corner of the world, from Switzerland to the Pacific island of Nauru, to be swallowed almost immediately in bafflingly complex money-laundering schemes. The whole process was dramatic testimony to how venality and myopic stupidity are always likely to triumph in the absence of regulatory institutions.

The Soviet bureaucrats who still administered the state did not understand how to monitor, regulate or adjudicate the principles of commercial exchange. The result “was that for all practical purposes the law-enforcement agencies themselves abandoned their task of safeguarding private commercial structures”, as Olga Kryshnanovskaya, the leading sociologist of the New Russia, explained. Even the KGB were clueless as to how one might enforce contract law.

2002 Boris Berezovsky at his home in Surrey



automatically mean defeat; it also damages one's reputation ... When setting up a *strelka*, participants do not negotiate many details, but there are subtle signs ... All violent entrepreneurs are remarkably sensitive to these signs and know how to read them, since those who fail do not live long. How many people should be taken to the *strelka*? Should they all be armed and ready for a shoot-out? Is it worth the risk?"

Despite the murders and the shoot-outs, the Russian mob actually ensured a degree of stability during the economic transition. Of course, by normal standards one might perceive extortion, kidnapping and murder as constituting a rather harsh policing regime; and most people would probably find it hard to approve of car theft, narcotics or sex trafficking as legitimate business enterprises. Yet Russia was not in a normal situation.

The Yeltsin government made some appalling errors. But they were under considerable economic pressure as the crumbling Soviet system was no longer able to guarantee food deliveries to the people, and inflation (even before the freeing of prices) had hit at least 150 per cent and was still rising. Something had to be done.

By the mid-Nineties the Russian government estimated that between 40 and 50 per cent of its economy was in the grey or black sectors, and it is within this context that Russia and the outside world need to understand the phenomenon of organised crime: it emerged out of a chaotic situation and was very brutal, but its origins lie in a rational response to a highly unusual economic and social environment.

Unlike the traditional American and Italian mafias, members of the Russian gangs were not strictly bound by family loyalties. The codes of the thieves' world (which conferred honour and recognition on the *vory*) only survived a matter of months in Russia's primitive capitalism.

Before long the title of *vor* was up for sale. Instead of earning it by spending years in prison, you could simply buy it. This devalued the authority of the *vor*, and the strict hierarchy of thieves that had pertained in Soviet-era prisons crumbled.

One of the most violent and feared groups to emerge in Moscow and elsewhere was the Chechen mafia. Their mere reputation for being both fearless and gruesome was often sufficient to persuade a businessman to take them on as his *krysha*. But their members were not drawn exclusively from the Caucasus, let alone from Chechnya. "The Chechen mafia became a brand name, a franchise – McMafia if you like," explained Mark Galeotti, who has devoted the past 15 years to studying the Russian mob.

"They would sell the moniker 'Chechen' to protection rackets in other towns, provided they paid, of course, and provided they always carried out their word. If a group claimed a Chechen connection, but didn't carry out its



2004 Artyom Tarasov

Between 1991 and 1996, the Russian state effectively absented itself from the policing of society, and the distinctions between legality and illegality, morality and immorality, barely existed.

"There were a number of *vory* who turned up that day – most of them Georgian. They had a clear mission: extract several million dollars from me or, failing that, kidnap me." Artyom Tarasov smiled as he described one of his first *strelki* or gangster meetings. *Strelki* were organised affairs whereby the *krysha* of one businessman would consult the *krysha* of another in order to settle a contractual dispute. In 90 per cent of cases, the *strelka* would finish with an agreement, and both businessmen were obliged to follow the advice of their respective *kryshy*. On this occasion, however, Tarasov had a narrow escape.

"A veritable army emerged from both sides – 30 to 40 men. This bunch of inveterate cut-throats had occupied the Club Volodya Cemago in Moscow's Taganka district. They were brandishing their



1998 Sergei Mikhailov

weapons in a way that would have terrified any normal person ..."

Tarasov was sent next door with his personal bodyguards to wait while his *krysha*, Malik and Shamad, negotiated with the *vory* from the other team. "Suddenly there was this wild screaming:

"Why did you come here? What are you doing mixed up with this bastard?"

"Our boys were shouting at the *vory*:

"He's just dirt. And who do you think you are anyway?"

"We are *vory-v-zakone!* they screamed back.

"Given that all were armed to the teeth, it was only a matter of minutes before they started shooting. It was just like a gangster movie – totally unreal."

Weighing up the situation, Tarasov made the right decision: he fled. Perhaps the first oligarch, or at least proto-oligarch, Tarasov was lucky to escape from this *strelka* alive.

Vadim Volkov, Russia's foremost student of "violent entrepreneurs" as he describes them, explained, "One cannot ignore a *strelka*. Not only does failure to show up for a *strelka*

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threats to the letter, it was devaluing the brand. The original Chechens would come after them.” So the Russian mafia as it developed was not guided by family loyalties, but solely by transactions. How much? Who for? What’s in it for me? This meant that they were unpredictable, fluid and dangerous.

By 1999 there were 11,500-plus registered “private security firms”, employing more than 800,000 people. Of these, almost 200,000 had licences to carry arms. The Russian Interior Ministry has estimated that there were at least half as many again that remained unregistered. By 1995, thousands of murders were being committed in Russia every year, especially in Moscow, St Petersburg, Ekaterinburg and other major centres of commerce. The cost of taking out a rival in 1997 was “\$7,000 for a ‘client’ without bodyguards and up to \$15,000 for one with bodyguards”.

Just outside the bleak centre of the Solntsevo (Sunnyside) district of Moscow, a road leads to the village of Fedosinye – physically very near the buzzing metropolis, but spiritually closer to

Averin, and together they began to take control of Solntsevo’s streets. A map of Moscow shows how a majority of the most influential gangs emerged from the postwar working-class districts that sit immediately outside the M-KAT, Moscow’s equivalent of the M25. Solntsevo grows like a wart off the south-west of the M-KAT. The cosmopolitan inhabitants of the city centre never considered these depressing zones an integral part of Moscow, nor were they particularly aware of their working-class inhabitants. But in the late Eighties the gangs started encroaching inwards.

Areas like Solntsevo possessed the key resource for the development of protection rackets – lots of tough, unemployed, aggressive young males, easily identifiable by their beloved uniform of tracksuits (sometimes accompanied by a baseball bat), cropped hair and tattoos.

Solntsevo offered more than just goons. One mile to the west lies Vnukovo, one of Moscow’s biggest airports. A little further round the M-KAT is another airport, Domodedovo. And a little further still, and equally enticing, lies Southern Port (Yuzhny Port), the huge river

Solntsevo leadership had been imprisoned at a crucial time, just as the market was about to open up. On their return, they discovered that other groups were moving in on their territory. The Chechen mafia posed the greatest threat to Solntsevo. Hooked up to a network of tribal militias in the Caucasus, the Chechens had weapons, recruits, money and a reputation as fearsome fighters.

The Slav–Caucasian Gang War that engulfed Moscow for about two years from 1992 is often portrayed as driven by national antipathy between the two groups. According to this widely held view, the bloody shoot-outs between the Chechens and Solntsevo in particular represented an attempt by the Slav groups to demonstrate their patriotism at a time of rising tension between the Russian army and insurgents in Chechnya itself.

There may have been elements of genuine nationalist ill will between the Caucasians and the Slav gangs, but behind the heady rhetoric there lay the predictable motive of economic interest. From 1988 to 1990, the Chechens had succeeded in wresting partial control of the

SKIPPING BETWEEN FOUNTAINS OF CHAMPAGNE AND LINES OF COKE, WOMEN WRITHED TO THE MARCHING BEAT OF ‘DEFENDERS OF LENINGRAD’

the peasant world of Tolstoy. Life here revolves around a modest and brightly coloured church. At the centre of the church’s nine bells (a huge collection for such a small community) is the sonorous bass dome, on which is engraved, “From the Senior Priesthood, the Charitable Foundation Uchastye, the Firm CB-Holding and the Solntsevo Brotherhood”.

The last three organisations were all the brainchild of Sergei Mikhailov, born into a working-class family in 1958 and raised in the Solntsevo district. As a young man, Mikhailov trained to be a maître d’hôtel at the Sovietskaya Hotel in Moscow. The job brought with it a certain influence because, as a registered hotel for foreigners, it was one of the few places in Moscow where alcohol could be purchased after 9pm.

“Remember,” said an erstwhile colleague of Mikhailov, “this was a country where collecting empty western beer cans was considered chic. Having access to alcohol after hours not only offered a certain prestige, it was a way to make money as well.”

In 1986, Mikhailov spent several months in custody for falsely claiming on the insurance on his motorbike. After receiving a conditional sentence, he returned to Solntsevo and devoted himself to his passion – wrestling. Reports from the time detail how he joined forces with another former prisoner, Viktor

docks through which goods from all areas of Russia pass into Moscow. The roads leading into Moscow via Solntsevo linked the Russian capital with Ukraine and the ports of the Black Sea. More commerce was concentrated here than in any other part of the city, and it was not long before the Solntsevo Brotherhood had established monopolies with allies at Vnukovo airport, a second airport, Sheremetyevo 2, as well as the Southern Port.

This proved especially advantageous when the Brotherhood was developing its first enterprise outside the protection business – the import of cars. As the oligarchs started to funnel huge amounts of cash into their pockets and organisations, there was a sudden rise in the demand not just for western cars, but for luxury cars. In a short time, the Mercedes-Benz 600 had become the status symbol of the New Russians, and Solntsevo controlled much of the vehicle traffic into the capital.

By the mid-Nineties, Moscow had the highest number of Merc 600s registered anywhere in the world.

In December 1989, Mikhailov, Averin and two other key leaders of the Brotherhood were arrested and held in custody for more than a year on suspicion of extortion. As in most similar trials of the time, witnesses just dropped their allegations or disappeared long before the case actually came to court. But the

Southern Port from the Solntsevo Brotherhood, as well as some of the key car dealerships. The most notorious clash between the two gangs took place in 1993 when Solntsevo became involved in a shoot-out with Chechen gangsters at the Kazakhstan Cinema. One of the Solntsevo legends, Cyclops, was killed in the battle, but slowly Mikhailov and his men were reasserting themselves as Moscow’s top dogs.

“Solntsevo operated differently from other groups and here lies the key to its success,” said the FBI man, Levinson. “Every brigade with its own leader was autonomous, earning its own money. Each brigade organised their own protection rackets and their own scams. The cash was not funnelled up to the leadership – it was a loose confederation and allowed people leeway. The top leaders, who included Mikhailov, were known as the Big Four. They also ran their own businesses, but they split the profits four ways.”

The Solntsevo empire grew. From car showrooms and bars, it expanded into hotels and supermarkets. It also controlled three major markets in the centre of Moscow and at least three major railway stations. Mikhailov seemed to understand instinctively that he must distance himself from the group’s overtly criminal activities. He refused to assume the crown of vor, insisting instead that he be described simply as a businessman. ➡



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As early as 1992, the organisation decided that it needed, like its competitors, to assume control of a financial institution. "Most Russian banks at this time were not banks in any recognisable sense," explained Mark Medish, who under President Clinton worked at the US Treasury as an expert on the Russian economy. "They did not take deposits or make credits; instead they made easy money by handling government transactions, borrowing state funds at low interest rates, then buying high-yield, short-term government bonds, making super profits."

The move into banking brought Solntsevo and the top criminal syndicates still closer to the oligarchs. Together they set exuberant new standards in tastelessness as they celebrated their status among the world's super-rich.

One of the many ways they liked to flaunt their wealth was throwing extravagant parties. A prominent oil executive threw a Soviet Union nostalgia party in a château outside Paris in the summer of 2004. It was a spectacularly ironic celebration of the system from whose downfall the oilman had garnered unbelievable

their actions had a huge economic and social impact on countries throughout western Europe, in the United States, in the Mediterranean (above all in Cyprus and Israel), in the Middle East and Africa, and in the Far East. Unable even to claim that they were helping to police the transition to capitalism, their influence has been more destructive than most of Russian organised crime.

Those organised-crime bosses who survived the Nineties settled well into Putin's Russia. Several have Interpol red notices on them – a request for arrest – but the government in Moscow shows no inclination to extradite them. Sergei Mikhailov, leader of the Solntsevo Brotherhood, has insisted that he is a legitimate businessman who now conducts much of his work in China. Other mobsters now make their living brokering major gas and oil deals. Many remain in the opaque world of private security. President Putin has restored the power and prestige of the KGB (under its new acronym, the FSB).

Under Putin, the Kremlin has clipped the wings of several of the most powerful

early oligarchs (before he fell foul of Putin), appointed Filip Bobkov, the former head of the KGB's 5th Directorate, as the boss of his security. "These days everyone is doing it," Artyom Tarasov told me in his Moscow office. "I was talking to my old employee, Viktor Vekselberg – you know, the one who bought the Fabergé eggs for Russia – who is one of the men behind the oil consortium TNK-BP. He was telling me the other day that he currently has 20 former KGB generals on his payroll."

The death of Alexander Litvinenko, the former senior KGB officer poisoned in his London exile in late 2006, revealed how confused the relationship between the KGB and private security services had become. In the late Nineties, Litvinenko himself had been assigned to protect the oligarch Boris Berezovsky while still working for the KGB, and one of the prime suspects in his murder was another former KGB man who ran his own private security firm, and had once also provided protection to Berezovsky.

Through such characters, the oligarchs were in a position to exercise influence over

DIFFERENT BRANCHES OF RUSSIA'S SECURITY SERVICES FOUND THEMSELVES FIGHTING AGAINST EACH OTHER ON BEHALF OF WARRING OLIGARCHS

riches. French peasants dressed as Soviet collective-farm workers from the Thirties were driving tractors around the fountain in front of the mansion. Underneath their fancy dress of greatcoats and Soviet Komsomol uniforms, the guests wore the finest designer garb. An imposing hammer and sickle was carefully positioned between two enormous red banners that covered most of the château's façade.

Inside, skipping between the fountains of champagne and lines of coke, women with miniskirts split to reveal their buttocks would writhe to the marching beat of *Defenders of Leningrad*. Paintings and busts of Lenin, Stalin and Brezhnev glared down with staunch disapproval on the unproletarian bacchanalia that satirised their memory.

The party cost several hundred thousand dollars – an unimaginable fortune to all but a tiny clique of Russians. On top of that, there was the cost of two aircraft chartered to bring most of the guests in from Moscow. There was a hierarchy within the party; only a privileged few were allowed into the inner core. At the doors of this sanctum, the photographers stopped snapping and the videos stopped whirring as the oligarchs inside contemplated their billions and how to multiply them further.

During the Nineties, not only did the oligarchs succeed in turning Russia upside down, but

oligarchs. From exile in the west or from inside prison, oligarchs such as Boris Berezovsky and Mikhail Khodorkovsky warn that the new president is the reincarnation of Stalin. But he isn't. He has fashioned a novel system that brings together aspects of capitalism and Soviet socialism – market authoritarianism. The oligarchs' desperate attempts to portray Putin as the new Stalin seek to conceal the primary responsibility they bear for the mess in which they and Russia find themselves.

After the period of "easy money", as the early Nineties were called, the oligarchs could buy whoever they wanted. When senior members of the KGB/FSB and MVD (Interior Ministry) observed how their influence was sinking as the wealth and power of the oligarchs grew, many decided to switch horses. The Russian security services have experienced fluctuating fortunes since the Gorbachev period. Some members established companies abroad as covers for industrial espionage and money laundering. Others were less fortunate, and in 1992 the KGB's financial situation deteriorated to such an extent that officers were forced to sell light bulbs and toilet paper stolen from their HQ in the Lyubyanka prison (as sacrilegious, surely, as nicking candlesticks from St Peter's in Rome).

Oligarchs and business empires started to employ former KGB men. Vladimir Gusinsky, media magnate and one of the most influential

the residual forces of law and order in what is known as the "deep state", the mighty forces of political influence that operate behind the scenes even in ostensible chaos. It went further, though – the integration of high-ranking KGB and MVD personnel into the paid retinues of the oligarchs triggered the privatisation of Russia's security forces. During the Nineties, these two iconic institutions of Soviet power became simply another competing private law-enforcement agency. As a consequence, different branches of Russia's security services would find themselves fighting against each other on behalf of warring oligarchs.

On December 2, 1994, Vladimir Gusinsky noticed that he was being followed by a group of large, intimidating masked men as he drove to his offices on Novy Arbat. These also housed the offices of his chief political sponsor, Yuri Luzhkov, the mayor of Moscow and a political rival to Boris Yeltsin. As the owner of NTV, the most popular independent television station, Gusinsky was among the most influential oligarchs.

Boris Berezovsky, the first among equals in the oligarchy, persuaded President Yeltsin that Gusinsky needed to be taught a lesson. In late November, an article called "The Snow Is Falling" in a pro-Yeltsin newspaper had claimed that Gusinsky's Most Company was "planning to force its way into power". If that was a

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shot across the bows, December 2 witnessed a full-scale broadside. The masked men started roughing up Gusinsky's bodyguards in the oligarch's car park. Watching from his office and feeling increasingly alarmed, Gusinsky was calling his contacts inside the counterintelligence service of the KGB. These guys turned up and a *razborka* – shoot-out – broke out. Before blood was spilt, however, one of the KGB men realised that their opponents were from the presidential security service. They decided to withdraw. The more powerful the oligarchs became, the more damaging their rivalry. This both parodied and accentuated the rivalries that existed within Russia's security forces.

"All of us from the intelligence networks sat up when the shoot-outs between the KGB and the Interior Ministry began," the former head of a Balkan intelligence service told me. He had grown up with a profound admiration for the KGB and observed the events in a state of shock. "We realised that the situation in Russia had run out of control. We could no longer rely on them – it was like losing a father."

The KGB officers and networks who had outsourced their services formed the middle belt of a pyramid supporting the opulent oligarchs at the top. The security services provided a crucial link with the state. But at the bottom of the pyramid was a diverse group

of people known as the *zashchita*, or "defence". This included a host of professionals – lawyers, PR companies, journalists (and, in the case of a few oligarchs, entire newspapers or television stations) – and anybody who might contribute to the defence of the oligarch's interests. The core of the *zashchita*, however, remained the *krysha* – the protection racket or mob. "Russian organised crime is thus characterised by at least three seamless webs," explained Jon Winer, President Clinton's deputy assistant secretary for international enforcement (or "drugs and thugs", as it is known colloquially in Washington), "between extortionists and security companies ... between licit and illicit business ... and between criminals on the one side and political and bureaucratic elites on the other. Out of these seamless webs has emerged a triangle of crime, business and politics," which is "extremely strong and resilient".

But the final link between the oligarchs and the most powerful mafia groups was forged through a common interest – the need to launder money. The Solntsevo Brotherhood and the Chechens in Moscow, and other huge syndicates – Tambovskaya in St Petersburg, Uralmash in Ekaterinburg – had reached the "second phase" on the path towards a global mafia status: they were all whole or partial monopoly controllers of specific goods and

services. Across the world, the trade in narcotics was one of the most profitable criminal activities. All the major criminal groups in the former Soviet Union had built up extensive business interests in the manufacture of amphetamines and Ecstasy, in the importation of cocaine into Europe and, above all, in the distribution and sale of heroin from Central Asia into eastern and western Europe and the USA.

The oligarchs instinctively understood that Russia was a capricious and dangerous environment and that their billions of dollars were not safe there. They overestimated their ability to control President Putin, the man whom they chose to replace the weak and easily manipulated alcoholic President Yeltsin. Yet their instincts served many of them well – as an insurance policy, they needed not just to get their money out of the country; they needed it to be clean once it arrived. So did the organised-crime groups. Everybody needed to launder their cash. But before they could establish a worldwide launderette, they all – oligarchs and mobsters alike – needed to establish themselves abroad. ■

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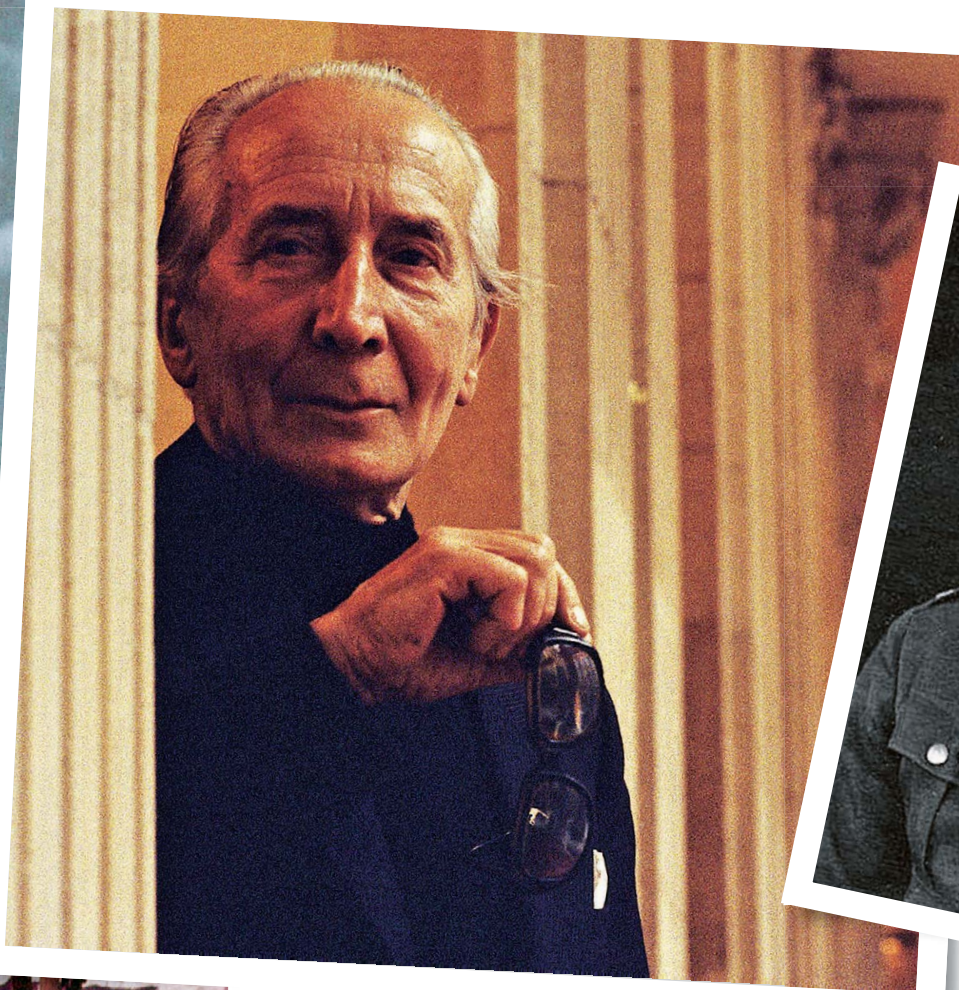
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THE SECRET HERO OF D-DAY



Allied soldiers coming ashore
on Juno Beach during the
D-Day landings in 1944.
Opposite: Roman Czerniawski
in 1985 and, in uniform, in 1939



No one paid much attention to the little Polish printer who lived in a flat in west London. He kept dozens of cats and watched a lot of James Bond films in his front room. He spoke with a heavy accent.

What none of his neighbours knew was that the diminutive Pole was a wartime British spy

Ben Macintyre reveals the truth about **Agent Brutus**

No one paid much attention to the little Polish printer who lived in a flat off Cromwell Road in west London. He kept dozens of cats and watched a lot of James Bond films in his front room. He spoke with a heavy Polish accent. He had an unpronounceable name: Roman Czerniawski. What none of his neighbours knew was that the diminutive Pole was a wartime British spy who had once been known by many other names. These included Walenty, Hubert, Armand and Brutus. He had been a secret agent, a double agent and a triple agent. He had spied for Poland, then Britain, then pretended to spy for Germany, while spying for the Allies all along.

Czerniawski died in 1985, virtually unknown. Yet as Agent Brutus, he played a pivotal role in ensuring the success of the D-Day landings, and helping Britain win the war.

The Polish spy has had a walk-on part in recent histories of the D-Day agents, yet much of his role has remained mysterious. In November, MI5 finally declassified the last remaining files relating to his wartime work – six dossiers containing hundreds of documents that allow the full story of Agent Brutus to be told at last.

The son of a Warsaw financier, Czerniawski trained as a fighter pilot before the war, and then turned his attention to military intelligence after a flying accident damaged his eyesight. In 1939, as the Polish army crumbled under attack from Nazi Germany, he escaped to France, via Romania. With the fall of France, unlike the many Polish patriots who took refuge in Britain to continue the fight against Hitler, he decided to remain in France, as an undercover spy.

With the help of his lover, Renée Borni, he made his way to Vichy France, where he obtained permission from the Polish underground to set up a spy network in occupied France, formed of “small cells of resistance ... joining together and forming one screen of eyes”.

The network run by Czerniawski, alias Armand Borni alias Walenty, became not just the largest espionage system in occupied France; it was almost the only one.

His principal partner in espionage was a Frenchwoman named Mathilde Carré, who was highly intelligent, extremely attractive and slightly unhinged. Czerniawski gave her the code name “La Chatte”, the she-cat, because, “You walk so quietly, in your soft shoes, like a cat.” Carré retorted, “I can also scratch.” With hindsight, it might have been a warning.

“We did not exist for each other sexually,” Czerniawski maintained in a statement included in the newly released files. “La Chatte was never in love with me.” This was almost certainly untrue.

From a flat in Montmartre, the two partners set out to spin a web of agents. Carré did the recruiting and Czerniawski gathered and analysed the intelligence, and sent it to London using a secret wireless set, or by courier though neutral Spain. Both Czerniawski and Carré were compelled not just by patriotism but a sense of historical destiny. He saw himself as his country’s liberator. “Many of her admirers told her she might even become a second Joan of Arc,” he wrote.

Czerniawski’s ambition was to provide the Allies with a complete picture of German military forces in France. The Interallié network, which he called “the Family”, swiftly expanded to include housewives, policemen, criminals, railway workers, labourers, waiters, retirees and others. The newly declassified files reveal the full breadth and depth of the intelligence resistance network. Some reports were 400 pages long, including maps, and had to be photographed page by page and smuggled out of France as undeveloped film.

In the autumn of 1941, Czerniawski was picked up at a remote airfield and brought to London in a Lysander aircraft flown by a pilot with a curled RAF moustache and the unimprovable name of Squadron Leader “Whippy” Nesbitt-Dufort, whose only French was the phrase “c’est la vie”. On his flying

AN INTERROGATOR FROM MI5 CALLED HIM ‘INTENSELY DRAMATIC AND EGOTISTIC... DUE IN SOME PART TO HIS SIZE’

visit to London, Czerniawski was awarded the Virtuti Militari, the Polish equivalent of the VC, by a grateful Polish government in exile. Czerniawski told the Polish intelligence service that Carré was the “perfect partner”, but he also described her as a “strange woman, idealistic but ruthless ... and highly strung”.

He was then parachuted back into occupied France and landed in a field of melons near Tours. Back in Paris, he assembled his team for a celebration, to hear a BBC announcer declare, “Many happy returns to our Family in France on the occasion of their anniversary.”

The next morning, Czerniawski was fast asleep when he awoke to a gunshot. Seconds later, the Gestapo burst into his bedroom and seized him. Mathilde Carré was arrested the same day.

Hugo Bleicher, a German counterintelligence officer, had been tracking the network for some time; under torture, one of the team had revealed the address of its headquarters in Montmartre. Czerniawski described Bleicher as clumsy and fat, with a “gait like an elephant and a puffy red face”. But Bleicher was a worthy adversary.

Mathilde Carré, Czerniawski’s partner in his Polish spy ring, in 1959. Below left: Carré’s German handler and

lover, Hugo Bleicher, 1961. Far right: Juan Pujol, aka Agent Garbo, outside Buckingham Palace in 1984



While Czerniawski awaited execution, Carré was taken by the Gestapo for interrogation to the Hotel Edouard VII, where she was given an appalling choice: collaborate, or die. Czerniawski later reflected: “How excellent is the German psychological approach to French women – comfort or death.”

La Chatte chose comfort. More than that, she soon became Bleicher’s lover. “I hated myself for my weakness,” she later wrote. She passed Bleicher the name of every person in the network. One by one they were rounded up, more than 60 people in all.

Czerniawski had been languishing in a prison cell for six weeks, wondering when he would be executed, when his lover, Renée Borni, appeared. She too had been arrested, but reported that her jailers had told her Bleicher deeply admired the Polish spy and that he might be able “to exploit this”.

“She implored me not to take my own life,” wrote Czerniawski. “Had it not been for Renée’s visit, I would probably have done so that very day, because I was afraid of interrogation by force.”

On November 29, Czerniawski sent



a letter to his captors, addressed to the German military commander in France and astounding in itschutzpah: he offered to spy for Germany against Britain, claiming he had come to realise that Poland's future lay with Germany and "the good brought by National Socialism to the New Europe".

If he were allowed to get to Britain, he said, he would recruit like-minded, pro-German Poles and "create a powerful Fifth Column", while also gathering information for Germany on Britain's aircraft and tank production, troop movements and order of battle.

He also pointed out that the Germans



had a grim insurance policy should he try to double-cross them: his mother was in Poland under German rule, his brother a German prisoner of war, his lover and former colleagues in the network were all captured. If he switched sides again, the Germans could kill them all.

"If I work for you, it will be for ideological reasons and there will be no need for reprisals," he said.

Czerniawski's offer to spy for Germany was, of course, a ruse. "I rejoiced at playing the naive role so well." But it was also a huge gamble with the lives of dozens of people. "I knew that the fate of my former colleagues was practically a foregone conclusion, but now I was involving my mother and brother."

Astonishingly, Bleicher and his German superiors swallowed the bait. He was taken to a flat on Rue Dufrenoy, given a set of civilian clothes and 10,000 francs and told to "escape" – make his way to unoccupied France, contact the Polish intelligence service and persuade them to smuggle him into Britain.

The British did not quite know what to make of Czerniawski when the little Pole turned up in Britain in October 1942, telling an extraordinary story of a daring escape from captivity via Spain and Gibraltar. Six weeks after his arrival, Czerniawski revealed that he had not really escaped at all, but had been allowed to go free on condition he spied for Germany. The double agent recruited by the Nazis now offered to work as a triple agent, feeding back false information to his German handlers: he called this "the great game".

With typical grandiosity, he demanded to be given a revolver so he could shoot himself if the Polish and British Secret Services rejected his offer. "If I have acted wrong in organising the great game, the news that I have perished in an air accident will save my family and my colleagues."

The head of the Polish intelligence service in London, Colonel Stanislaw Gano, was unconvinced. He regarded Czerniawski as a "sinister individual" who ought to be shot.

Instead, the offer was relayed to a top-secret section of MI5 known as BIA, run by another largely unsung wartime hero. TA Robertson, universally known as Tar, was the architect of the double-cross system, a sophisticated network of double agents being used to feed disinformation to the enemy. He had already recruited several such spies including Juan Pujol, "Agent Garbo", perhaps the most celebrated of all British double agents, who would go on to create an entire network of fictitious sub-agents, all passing lies to the Germans.

Czerniawski was closely interrogated by a brilliant young MI5 lawyer named Christopher Harmer, who concluded that although Czerniawski was "intensely dramatic and egotistic ... due in some part to his size", he was nonetheless "an excellent agent who is believed and very easy to run".

Others in MI5 disagreed. John Marriott, Robertson's chief assistant, said that, "The Germans have really lost nothing by letting 'Walenty' go, for they had cleaned up the whole of his organisation, and the only thing left to them would have been the doubtful satisfaction of executing Walenty himself."

Finally, it was agreed to add Czerniawski to the roster of double agents, while keeping a close eye on him for any indication of treachery. His telephone was bugged and his letters opened. The MI5 team remained anxious that if he decided it would be in Poland's interests, Czerniawski might easily switch sides yet again, and stab them in the back. So they code-named him "Brutus".

Under close supervision, using the radio crystals he had brought from France, Czerniawski made his first contact with German intelligence just before Christmas 1942. Unique among double agents, Czerniawski was a trained intelligence officer and military professional. From now until the end of the war, he sent an almost uninterrupted stream of messages to Germany – a mixture of military information that was true but unhelpful, and a great deal that was deliberately misleading.

The newly released files include intercepted German messages decoded at Bletchley Park, which, unknown to Brutus, indicated how highly trusted he was by his Nazi handlers. "The Germans have full confidence in Brutus," one report noted.

"Of all the agents, Brutus appears to be the one who works most directly to the [German] military authorities," Harmer noted. Czerniawski continued to behave as if the future of Poland were in his hands. "I am acting solely from ideological motives," he told his German spymaster by wireless. "With the object of securing for Poland an honourable place in the new Europe. That is the only reward I ask."

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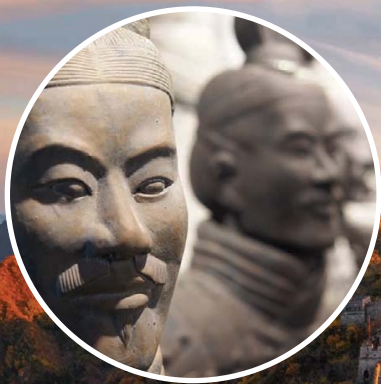
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Czerniawski might have a “natural aptitude for espionage”, as one of his handlers put it, but he was also a born troublemaker. Colonel Gano described him as an “infernal nuisance”. He was even briefly arrested and court-martialled by the Poles for fomenting opposition to the head of the Polish air force, and found guilty of gross insubordination. He was freed after a few months, too useful to remain incarcerated for long.

Brutus's finest hour came in the run-up to D-Day. The double-cross team was central to the deception plan, code-named “Fortitude”, intended to convince Hitler that the invasion of Europe would take place at Calais and Norway, rather than Normandy. Czerniawski supplied the Germans with reams of fake information, indicating that armies were gathering in Kent and Scotland, where none existed, preparatory to attacking German positions in Calais and Norway.

At the same time, he tied the Germans in knots by demanding parachute drops of money and radio supplies. In the minds of the Germans he was a spy of “herculean ability”, a belief that persisted long after the Allied invasion force landed at Normandy.

The D-Day deception worked, tying up German forces that might have repelled the Normandy invasion. In the aftermath much of the credit was given to Brutus, who had, in the words of one military commander “saved the bacon” of the invasion force.

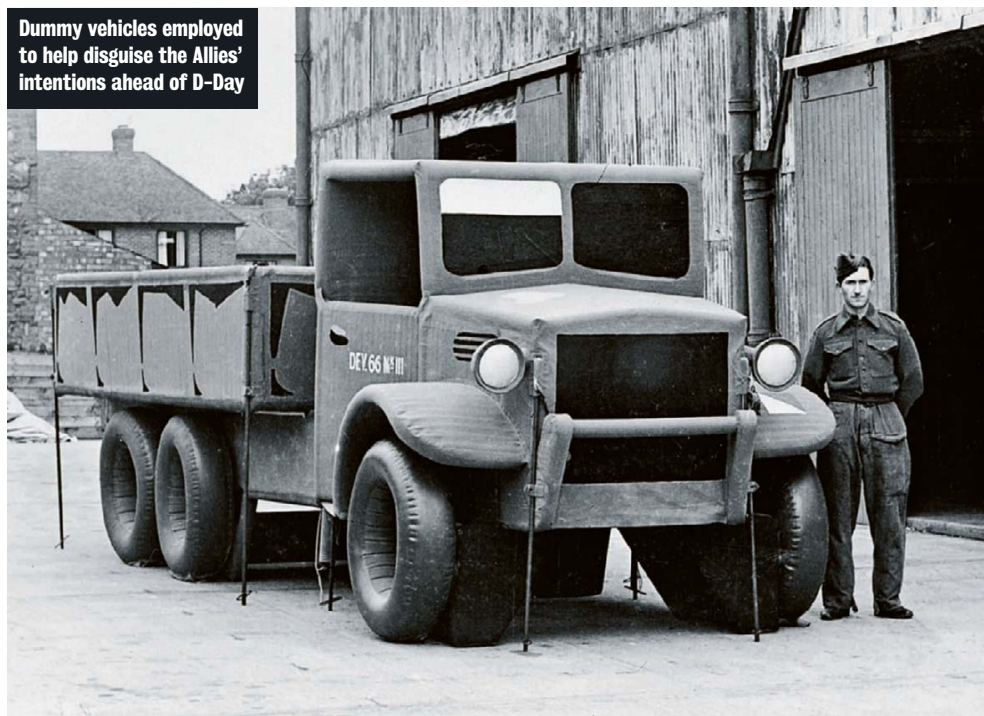
“Brutus has proved one of the most outstandingly successful double agents,” his handlers wrote.

Indefatigable to the end, Czerniawski even framed a plan to lure a German assassination squad across the Channel to try to kill Eisenhower and other military leaders at a meeting in a military camp in Kent. “Brutus will volunteer to flash a torch to indicate the exact landing point and direct the raiders to the mess where the exalted personages will be holding their post-prandial celebrations.” MI5 would then arrange “a suitable reception to ensure that none of them escapes capture”. The invasion was completed before the ambush plot could be implemented.

In the final stages of the war, Czerniawski volunteered to be parachuted behind the lines, where he would contact German intelligence, convince them that he had been sent by the British to organise anti-German resistance, and then pass back any information he obtained to Britain. The triple agent would offer to turn quadruple agent, while continuing to work for MI5. Sadly, a plan that would have created the first quintuple agent in history came to nothing.

After Brutus's final transmission, late in 1944, the German wireless operator at the other end “waxed quite sentimental, thanking him for his excellent work in the past”.

Dummy vehicles employed to help disguise the Allies' intentions ahead of D-Day

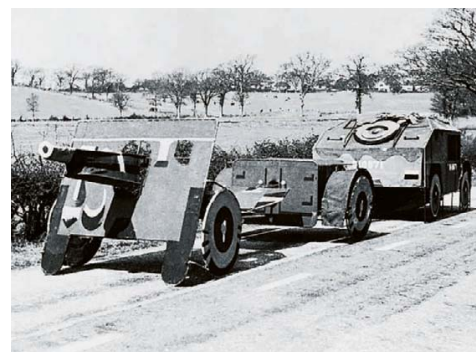


AGENT BRUTUS HAD, IN THE WORDS OF ONE MILITARY COMMANDER, ‘SAVED THE BACON’ OF THE D-DAY INVASION FORCE



Czerniawski was prepared to continue working for MI6 after the war, but a memo in the file notes that he was “a bit too dashing for solid peacetime SIS [MI6] methods. While the results were excellent ... believe me, he was a handful.”

Mathilde Carré had also been sent to Britain to spy. Picked up by British intelligence, she claimed she had only worked for the Germans in order to betray them, but unlike Czerniawski she was not believed, and her role in the betrayal of the Interallié network soon emerged. After the war, La Chatte was sentenced to death by a French court, later commuted to a life sentence. She was released in 1954.



Most of Czerniawski's fellow members of the Interallié network survived the war, along with his mother and brother.

Czerniawski refused to return to a Poland under Communist rule, insisting he “would rather die on the battlefield fighting for England than return to Poland under Russian control”. He married a fellow agent from the Interallié team, divorced, remarried, then divorced and remarried again.

Although he wrote up his wartime experiences and was secretly appointed OBE, it was perhaps appropriate that he should remain in semi-obscurity, an anonymous Polish printer with an army of cats, undercover to the end. ■

IT'S ALL ABOUT ME! ME! ME!

'Self-care' is the latest lifestyle obsession – and already the (smug) buzzword of 2018

By Ben Machell

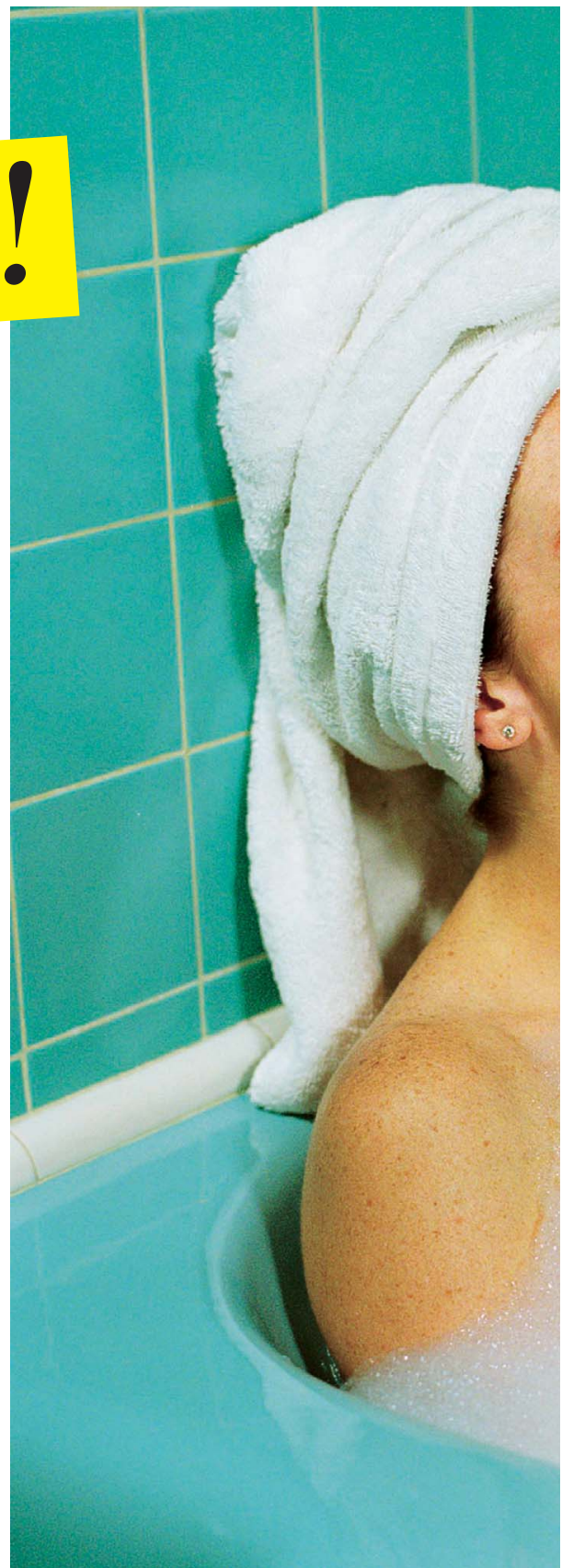
When did you last do something for yourself? What nurturing personal acts have you carried out today? How often do you give yourself permission to feel peaceful? Why am I asking you all these odd personal questions? I'm asking you all these questions because, to be honest, you're going to have to get used to them. If the past few years have been characterised by the inexorable growth of benign-sounding but oddly amorphous lifestyle practices – “wellness”, “mindfulness”, “hygge” – then in 2018 we have a new buzzword to get our heads around. Welcome to the year of “self-care”. If you now want to take a few minutes to perhaps make a cup of tea, buy yourself something nice online or run a hot bath, then, please, be my guest. You owe yourself nothing less.

What exactly is self-care? I mean, it sounds good. It looks good, too. On Instagram, you can find almost four million photos posted with the #selfcare hashtag, cosy images of people enjoying a massage, or drinking coffee and reading a book, or showing off some new cosmetic products, or having a bubble bath. But self-care, according to its advocates, is absolutely not the same as indulgence or even just, y'know ... the mundane act of reading a book or having a bath. No way. It is, rather, a powerful and necessary coping mechanism for anyone caught-up in the “grind” or “rat race”

of modern life (modern life is always a “grind” or a “rat race”) and all its ensuing anxieties.

Delve into the self-care webspace and, fairly quickly, you start to detect a note of defensiveness among the otherwise warm but infantilising tone of bloggers encouraging you to do things like shower or sleep or watch box sets. “Self-care isn't selfish” has become a rallying call; the internet is awash with self-care checklists of things you can do to make your life that much better. One such list has 64 suggestions, including lighting some candles and drinking some wine, watching videos of cute animals, skipping household chores for the day, eating something you like and buying yourself something you don't really need “but that represents caring for yourself”. I mean ... yeah. Fine. Cool. It is, you realise, possible that you've been doing far more self-care than you knew. All those evenings I spent drinking cans of Stella alone on my sofa while watching old episodes of *ThunderCats* on YouTube? Self-care. You can start to see the attraction.

What's ironic is that it wasn't always like this. Thirty years ago, the American civil rights activist and “black lesbian mother warrior poet” Audre Lorde wrote, “Caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare.” In other words, if you were an oppressed minority, then the idea of self-care was something you had to embrace to keep yourself going, because it wasn't like society was going to care for you. Black women and LGBT+ groups, in particular, ➤





*Are you a self-care
disciple – or just
plain selfish?*

TAKE THE QUIZ!

1. A popular self-care blog implores you to 'be selfish'. How do you respond?

A By grabbing a dictionary, double-checking that "selfish" still in fact means "selfish", which it does. You then quickly think of all those brilliant selfish people you know, although this doesn't take long, because there aren't any. You then slowly close your laptop, never to open it again.

B By ordering Chinese instead of pizza, because you prefer Chinese, even though your partner prefers pizza. The rest of the evening is a tense write-off, but at least you put yourself first for once.

C By making a snap decision to curl up on the sofa and binge on *Friends*, cancelling your plans to go to the hospital to donate that kidney you'd kind of promised you would.

2. Spending 45 minutes sitting on the loo reading *Viz* while your young children tear around the house like Barbary apes is...

A One of the main reasons your wife is leaving you.

B A rare guilty pleasure, to be savoured and appreciated.

C A nourishing act of self-love you're striving to do at least twice a day.

3. Modern life, in your opinion, is...

A Pretty great.

B Bit of a stress, but better than living in a mud hut and worrying about the Black Death.

C An endless hellscape of inescapable angst, obligation and thankless grind, the only escape from which involves splurging on skincare.

4. A friend keeps asking if you'd like to go out for a drink at some point. Why is this?

A Because they are ... your friend?

B Because they're not quite getting the hint that you'd just rather stay home watching cat videos and wolfing oven chips. ➔

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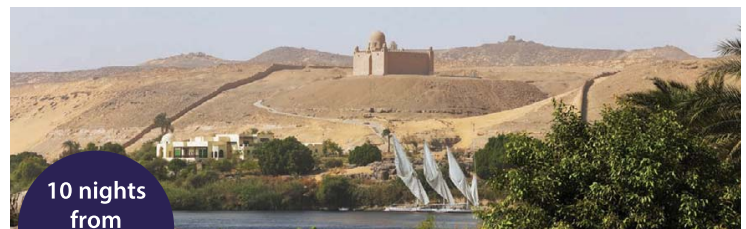
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were talking about self-care long before it was an Instagram hashtag.

But today? Today everybody feels that they are oppressed. It's no coincidence that the Google search for "self-care" peaked the week after the election of Donald Trump. For people suffering with depression, anxiety or other mental health issues, reminding themselves to do things like wash or eat well is important. But the majority of people posting self-care selfies online do not face these struggles. They are just people – often healthy, affluent people – engaging in a lifestyle trend that, like mindfulness or wellness, has been monetised and sold back to them. We live, after all, in an age where Gwyneth Paltrow can recommend that women buy jade eggs at 30 quid a pop and put them in their vaginas. Actually, perhaps compared with that, taking ten minutes to have a cup of tea and a screen break and calling it self-care is a lot less hassle.

There is, inevitably, a slew of books, either recently released or on the horizon. There's *Recharge* by Julie Montagu ("An abundance of guidance, tips and advice designed to help you keep self-care at the forefront of your mind"). There's *The Self-Care Project* by Jayne Hardy ("Without the restorative power of self-care, how will we ever escape the vicious circle where we're sick and fed-up of feeling sick and fed-up?"). Or *The Self-Care Revolution* by Suzy Reading ("What if it were possible to help ourselves thrive, rather than simply survive?"). Or *Self-Care for the Real World* by Nadia and Katia Narain ("Learning self-care is like building your own lifeboat, plank by plank").

You can buy temporary tattoos bearing slogans such as "Love Yourself" and "Treat Yourself". Many beauty and cosmetics retailers now list their recommended "self-care" gift ideas. And much like the customer, when it comes to self-care, you, the practitioner, are always right. If a relationship with someone is making you unhappy or stressed, self-care often dictates that you "let them go" or brand them "toxic" rather than asking yourself questions such as, "Perhaps I can be a nightmare too?"

And in spite of the boom that the election of Trump gave the movement, it's interesting to see just how Trumpian much of the rhetoric of self-care has become, an observation recently flagged by *The New Yorker's* Jordan Kisner. "Completely unconcerned with what's not mine" is a common Instagram caption. Ditto, "But first, YOU" and "I can't give you a cup to drink from if mine is empty". The hashtag #lookoutfornumberone crops up, too. Remember, Donald Trump is someone who we now know eats cheeseburgers in bed while watching TV. I mean, it really doesn't get much more #selfcare than that. Good for him, I guess. Perhaps it's the lifestyle trend we deserve. ■



C Because they are an emotionally exhausting vampire whose selfish behaviour (the bad kind of selfish behaviour) makes them a toxic presence you must immediately cut out of your life so that you can spend more time reading self-care blogs and gradually metamorphosing into a duvet.

5. That woman at the gym who never seems to blink wants to know if you set aside time for self-love. How do you respond?

A You tell her to mind her own bloody business.

B You tell her that you've been toying with the idea of buying a foot spa in the sales.

C You immediately show her your diary, which has "SELF-LOVE" written again and again and again, like it's been typed out by Jack Nicholson in *The Shining*. You then exchange high-fives and head straight to the hot tub.

6. Unhappiness, disappointment, conflict and discord are all what?

A Inevitable aspects of the human condition. Suck it up.

B Things you'd prefer to blot out, though ideally without having to make too many in the way of commitments or sacrifices.

C Things that might go away if you just hide under your bedding for long enough.

7. Somebody says that the whole concept of 'self-care' sounds like it's been co-opted by a swathe of people who have basically got

nothing wrong with them and just like the idea of being able to do all the stuff they do anyway, but while making a great big pious song and dance about it. How do you respond?

A You don't respond, because it was actually you who just said it.

B You mumble in agreement but then quickly delete all those Instagram pics of you playing on your Xbox with the #selfcare hashtag.

C You spontaneously combust.

8. You cook some dinner. This is because...

A You like dinner.

B You know that eating dinner is good for you so you should probably cook some.

C You are fully committed to the practice of self-care.

9. You then take a shower. Why?

A Because showers are nice.

B Because you're smelly, and you don't want to be smelly.

C Um, hello? Self-care!

10. You then go to bed and fall asleep. How come?

A Because sleep is nice.

B Because if you don't sleep, you'll be tired the next day, and being tired is bad.

C SELF-CARE!!!

IF YOU ANSWERED MOSTLY...

A's Self-care is definitely not for you. You are either blissfully contented or, on some level, relish the pain of existence. Oh well.

B's You have a tentative curiosity. Perhaps you don't like the idea of missing out on current wellness trends, or maybe you're just beguiled by the idea that you're meant to feel like the Buddha for drinking a hot chocolate or ignoring your mum's phone calls.

C's Congratulations, you are a fully signed-up member of the self-care revolution. You're constantly asking the questions, "What is best for me? What do I want?", and if that means you end the year as an obese, unemployed recluse with amazing skin, then so be it. And if you don't like the sound of that, relax. There'll be something new coming along in 2019. Always is. ■

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History buoys: sail to Valletta in Malta (above) or enjoy a colourful theatre show (below)

to be. There's always something new to try, once you've perfected relaxing by the pool. Try bridge or table tennis or, for a small charge, watercolour painting, Pilates or, on *Britannia*, a cooking class in The Cookery Club.

If you're travelling with children, P&O Cruises has five family friendly ships, and each has fun-packed children's clubs, for ages 2 to 17, including after-dark activities, from pizza parties to movie nights. The friendly youth team will even watch over little ones in the night nursery until 2am during school holidays, so you can enjoy a night out.

What you do ashore is just as much a part of your holiday and, wherever it is you sail,

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Why not go snorkelling from Dubrovnik in Croatia, or explore the fantastic old towns of Tallinn in Estonia or Valletta in Malta. P&O Cruises has thought of everything, so you don't have to.





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DARKEST HOUR



How to get dressed

Hilary Rose

Me and my great Bretons

Some people get through January by telling themselves how healthy they're going to be by the end of it. You joined the gym, you haven't had a drink for a fortnight and you're halfway to convincing yourself that steamed broccoli is every bit as delicious as pizza, but in a different, better way. Me and Jules have been road-testing another way to make it through to February. It's called "Have lunch at the River Cafe, then leave the country". Before you scoff, I think you'll find that when you consider the cost per use of your 12-month gym membership, not to mention the price of broccoli, then overpriced pasta and a British Airways booking reference begin to look a lot more fiscally responsible. And in case you wonder where I found such a phrase, the answer is Mark Carney. He's forever going on about fiscal responsibility and loosening monetary policy, and my brain seems strangely drawn to long words when they're said by a hot Canadian in a suit.

But to business, which is stripy Breton-style jumpers. I wear them with jeans all winter, just as I wear stripy cotton Breton T-shirts all summer. It's a pity that stripy tops aren't the most flattering thing I can do to myself, in fact quite the opposite, seeing as they add unwelcome inches in width. The end result is similar to an American football player, but with thinner legs and higher heels. La Redoute has a smart ecru/camel wool-mix version with



The most useful thing I've ever owned is a stripy wool jumper to wear with jeans all winter

ribbed cuffs (£21; laredoute.co.uk) and Crew Clothing's stripe cotton/wool Milano jumper is slightly flared (£35; crewclothing.co.uk). My current favourite is navy and white cashmere with a pleasing little neon star on each cuff (Sienna style, £210; wyselondon.co.uk) but I'd happily take the Ines ivory/navy stripe as well (£195).

Maje has a stripy top in wool with a bow tie at the back reduced to £125.40 (uk.maje.com) and The White Company has one in black/oatmeal reduced to £49 (thewhitecompany.com). Jigsaw's block-stripe jumper has horn buttons on the shoulder and is half price (£55; jigsaw-online.com).

Obviously, I should be encouraging you to wear these with cropped flared jeans, or distressed jeans, or low-heeled sock boots, or whichever combination of the above is fashionable. Equally obviously, I'm still in my skinnies and leather boots and showing no signs at all of moving on. My father says I look like Max Wall in skinny jeans, which I suspect is not a compliment. Happily, I don't know who Max Wall is. I could add "ditch skinnies" to my 2018 list of self-improvement goals, if such a list existed, but alas it does not. And so instead, faced with a dilemma of any type, such as where to lunch or what to wear, I will ask myself three things. 1. What is the fiscally responsible answer? 2. Would a loosening of monetary policy in my current account help? And, 3. What would Mark Carney do? ■

What we love Stripy jumpers

NATALIE HAMMOND



BODEN, £75
(boden.co.uk)



ORWELL + AUSTEN, £150
(020 7243 6912)



TOPSHOP, £49
(topshop.com)



CHINTI & PARKER, £250
(chintiandparker.com)



URBAN OUTFITTERS, £48
(urbanoutfitters.com)



GANNI, £190
(ganni.com)



Live for the moment

Escape to beautiful Jersey and you can exchange the rat race for a new lease of life – whether it's peaceful strolls along the beach or high-octane adventures with all the family

Overworked, overwhelmed and in need of a little life support? Then it's time to give yourself a break – on Jersey. Just a 40-minute flight from London, this Channel Island gem is the ideal spot to rewind, banish negativity and rediscover the cheerful, family loving side of yourself that so often gets lost in the daily grind.

Do a lot, do a little, the choice is yours – a trip to Jersey couldn't be easier. Despite being just a few miles from France, with a warm and sunny climate, the currency is the pound and almost everyone speaks English. So, there's no queuing for euros – just get there and go.

Beaches, delicious food, picnics and great accommodation, a summer visit has all the ingredients you need to unwind.

All ages will enjoy some action-packed excitement, miles away from everyday routine, at Valley Adventure in St Brélade. Set in a beautiful natural valley, it is packed with activities, from zip-lining to archery, and paintballing to aerial trekking – an obstacle course set high off the ground. It's the sort of physical challenge that makes you forget about office life, designed to lift the spirits and blow away the cobwebs. Once you've conquered your fears, you could treat yourself to a well-deserved

Find the time for family fun

Forage in the rock pools or simply have a picnic on one of Jersey's many soft, sandy beaches



refuelling stop in The Wayside at St Brélade's Bay. Set right on one of the most popular and family friendly beaches on the island, you can relax with a coffee and a snack, taking in the views, while the children build castles in the soft sand.

Sometimes, just slowing the pace is exactly what you need from a holiday, and Jersey is full of options for more traditional sightseeing and activities. From looking for shells and swimming, to meeting the animals at Jersey's award-winning conservation zoo, you'll never be stuck for things to do.

Cycling is safe and easy, thanks to reduced road-speed limits, and there are plenty of walking trails for all abilities. Or you could just browse an afternoon away in the quaint local shops – whatever you choose to do, you'll soon wind down.

“You will leave any trip to Jersey with a sense of optimism and a smile on your face

Excellent food is all part of the Jersey experience and a visit to The Farm House in St John comes with a chance to meet the island's famous Jersey cows. Delicious home-cooked meals, made with locally sourced produce, are served in a beautifully restored farmhouse by husband and wife chefs Ola and Dominik. It's the sort of quality and personal touch that Jersey is known for.

Finally, for a really magical end to the day, why not marvel at the bioluminescence on the beach near La Rocque. Jersey Walk Adventures offers “moonwalk” tours of the otherworldly rock pools and the green glowing marine creatures revealed when the tide recedes.

However you spend your time, after a holiday on this friendly island two things are guaranteed – first, that you will leave with a new-found sense of optimism and a smile on your face, and second, that you'll be counting the days until you can visit Jersey again.



For more information, go to www.jersey.com/summerfeelings

Style For men

SIMON HILLS



Real nautical style

Fashion brand Saint James was established in Normandy in 1850, making tightly woven clothes to protect sailors from salt water and gales. It was a supplier to the French navy and the Breton stripe, which features in the Meridien Modern sailor T-shirt, £55, above right, was at the heart of its designs. The new collection includes the round-neck Caen jumper, £175, above left (saint-james.com).

BUY THIS
Classic linen
shirt, £110
(dundaslondon.com)



Gym kit update

Burton has used the HIIT (high-intensity interval training) acronym for its new sportswear label. Despite its name, the range is designed to be worn outside the gym, too, and includes the lightweight Reflective jacket, £40, HIIT hoody, £36, and baseball tee, £22 (burton.co.uk).



5 reasons why we love... Sven Pathfinder 1x11 adventure bike

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3. The Salsa Cowchipper handlebar is halfway between a full-on "dirt drop" and cyclo cross bar.
4. The Pr 4 hubs and DT rims are lightweight and tubeless ready...
5. ... and can take tyres up to 56mm wide (£3,000; svencycles.com).

Cut-price luxury

These heavy-duty jeans, £188, in 23oz Japanese denim, are from Archibald London, a British company that uses the same manufacturers and craftsmen who make pieces for designer outlets, but sells them for lower prices. It also sells shoes, sweaters and scarves (archibaldlondon.com).



THE LITTLE THINGS THAT COUNT

Lace-up boots. By Rachael Dove



£110, Jones Bootmaker

£235, Grenson

£160, Hudson

£119, Kurt Geiger

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MANTALK

'If I wasn't me,
I'd want to be me'

Conor McGregor

Eating out Giles Coren



‘On the final day of 2017, I had not just the best mouthful of the year, but the best mouthful of my life’

The Bell Inn, Oxfordshire

If the world had its head screwed on right, there would not be reviews of restaurants in the glossy supplements every week; there would be reviews of churchyards. They would be so much more useful. So much more reader-friendly. So much more relevant.

This is partly because churchyards, unlike restaurants, are free to enter. So if you saw a good one reviewed on a Saturday morning, you could drop the paper, load everyone into the car or on to the bus or train, regardless of your means, and go there. And, unlike with most decent restaurants, you could take the kids. And the dog. And you could wear whatever you were standing up in. And if you didn't like it, well, it would not have cost you a penny beyond your travel costs.

Furthermore, wherever you live in the United Kingdom, there is a good chance I would be down your way quite often, celebrating the unheralded local treasures, because the location of good churchyards, unlike good restaurants, is not skewed preposterously towards London and one or two other wealthy towns. Because churchyards, unlike restaurants, do not need rivers of local disposable income to survive. There needs only to have been a little bit of money in the area at some point in the past 1,000 years – wool money, horse money,

royal or aristocratic money, church money, Crusades money, corn money, military money, mining money, train money, mill money – for there to be a church, made beautiful for the love of God, and a piece of land surrounding it, kept clean and pretty for hundreds of years out of respect for the dead.

Churchyards, unlike restaurants, are modest, beautiful and replete with history. They speak silently for millions of forgotten souls. They are covered in writing, carved into stone dominoes that make for the best hide-and-seek fields on earth. And they don't send someone round to “explain the concept” as soon as you walk in.

From churchyards, unlike most restaurants, there are often great views. And they are not kept back for the high-rolling regulars who get first dibs on the window seats. At churchyards, you can usually park. And if there is anyone else there at all, they are probably not texting the whole time. And you can leave whenever you want, without having to ask 14 times for the bill. In fact, the only drawback is that if you want to eat in a graveyard, you have to take your own food. But then that is also true of many a restaurant.

Back in June, I spoke highly of the churchyard at Brill in Buckinghamshire, where I took the kids to play hide-and-seek after an excellent lunch at the Pointer. And this time last year I extolled the virtues of one in Rowde, near Devizes in Wiltshire, with its well-appointed playground and captivating, almost alpine echo. That was after lunch at the George & Dragon.



The Bell Inn

Langford, Nr Burford,
Oxfordshire
(01367 860249;
thebelllangford.com)

Cooking 10

Location 10

Service 10

Score 10

Price Starters, £7-8;
pizzas, £9-12; mains,
£9-£16; pint of Hooky,
£3.40. Value that is
beyond stonking.

a few slices of the roast dry-aged sirloin, which I had wanted to try alongside my healthier-sounding fillet of bream just because, you know, roasted dry-aged sirloin.

The bread was crisp and chewy like the pizza but running with buttery bone fat and verdant with chopped flat parsley. It was so pure, so honest, so tear-jerkingly real and true that I wasn't surprised when my eye, once it had dried and looked up from the plate, focused immediately on the spine of Fergus Henderson's *Nose to Tail Eating*, on a shelf behind Esther. For this heartbreaking celebration of all that is right in the world was nothing more nor less than Fergus's roasted marrow bones with parsley salad and sourdough toast ... turned into pizza!

But perfection can always be improved. This happened when I took a sliver of the fat, gamey sirloin, which was one of three roasts they had on (along with Kelmscott pork loin & apple sauce and roast chicken, pig in blanket & bread sauce), and spread it with fresh horseradish, then laid it into the garlic bread, folded it over and dipped it into a little steel pot of the sticky veal reduction they use for gravy, then bit and swallowed.

Best mouthful of the year? Best mouthful of my life, more like.

Hats off also to the half-pint of shell-on prawns the kids snarfed down with the pizzas, the "lentil vinaigrette, goat's curd, beetroot and green sauce" (a healthy option that, Esther said, "they have managed to make taste sinful"), the Tenderstem broccoli with chilli and garlic and my dazzlingly crisp and succulent fillet of bream over a fragrant stew of red peppers, chickpeas and chorizo.

This guy Noest can really, really cook and the balance of pub classics (fish and chips, cheeseburger) along with pizzas and proper post-Henderson British cooking (I'm having the boiled ham in parsley sauce with carrots and spuds next time) is the perfect recipe for a destination restaurant that also wants to feed hungry locals four or five times a month. At prices that are two or three pounds a dish below what you might expect for food of such quality, this beautiful little restaurant hard by the best 1,000-year-old church in Oxfordshire is my gift to you for 2018. If it doesn't win a hatful of prizes this year I will eat that hat, with parsley sauce.

And I tell you who agrees with me: the Christ figure on the famous 8th-century rood relief, mounted on the east wall of the south porch at St Matthew's, Langford. He appears to have loved it so much, his head has fallen off. ■

Because that is another great thing about churchyards: they are usually not far from a pub – that other centuries-old British institution, stone-hewn, equally indispensable, the warp to the church's weft in the history of our island life. Which is just as well because, what with most pubs having become restaurants now, I can get around an awful lot of churchyards and call it work.

Which is what happened the other weekend at Langford in west Oxfordshire, where we had parked for lunch at the Bell Inn (newly taken over by chef Tom Noest and manager Peter Creed, formerly of the excellent Chequers in Churchill, not far away), and were just coming in sight of the pub on foot when Sam and Kitty shouted out, "Churchyard!"

And then, being four and six respectively, they shouted, "Churchyard! Churchyard! Churchyard!" until we promised that, yes, we could come here as soon as lunch was done and play hide-and-seek and climb the trees and read all the names on the graves.

Esther and I were as glad as the kids were, frankly, because we always need a good exit plan when eating out as a family. To get through any meal without tantrums or iPads involves ordering everything to come at the same time, eating at breakneck speed and then having somewhere nearby the children want to go, towards which they and Esther can set out, while I settle the bill, thank people, tip heavily to compensate for spillages, all that caper. And this one looked a corker.

"Norman," said Esther, regarding the square bell tower, clad incongruously in pinkish plaster.

"Or possibly even Saxon," I said, getting slightly Saxon vibes. (Wikipedia says that it "may postdate the Norman Conquest but is high-quality work by Anglo-Saxon masons", so it's honours even there.)

But first, lunch, which was a triumph. The pub is old and small and cosy. Sixteenth century, in fact, so built halfway between the foundation of the church (called St Matthew's, Langford) and now. In fact, very possibly by the same guys who put the two flying buttresses against the north side of the north aisle at the behest of some long-dead Tudor benefactor. Looking at those buttresses now, leaning hard against the bulging Norman stone like two grizzled gatekeepers trying to hold castle doors shut against a slaving mob, you get an urgent sense of the very moment in 1574 when they first went up. You feel that if the masons had left it even another week, all those years ago, the whole thing would have come crashing down.

And then, no doubt, they repaired for lunch to the pub they had just built. But they won't have had a chance to eat the best thing I ate in the whole of 2017 (on the last day of that year, as it happens) because it came out of the pizza oven that Peter and Tom had only just had put in. And it wasn't either of the wonderful sourdough pizzas that Kitty and Sam devoured, crispy and thin but also chewy and ripe, blistered like the moon, nutty and dense, with superb tomato sauce and excellent mozzarella.

No, it was the garlic, parsley and bone marrow flatbread the kitchen sent out with

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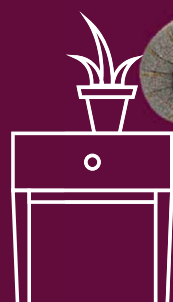
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‘Never forced open
a stranger’s door
with a crowbar?
Might not be legal,
but I recommend it’



MARK HARRISON

Family, eh? You can’t beat it. Just when I thought I might struggle for a subject, in these dark dog days of winter when all any sensible person wants is to be tucked up watching their box set of choice, along comes Cousin Steve with a peach of a story. Read on ...

Steve and his girlfriend, Abby, had spent the night round at ours. We’d had a lot of fun – eating, drinking, making merry, even singing, if memory serves – at least until my wife and daughter told me to shut up, stop playing the name-on-head game, etc. Steve and Abby departed late doors. Nicola and I then busied ourselves tidying up, the children, true to form, having magically evaporated to their respective beds the moment the door closed behind our guests.

Just as this tidying process was complete – it took the thick end of half an hour, because, as I say, it had been a good old night – Nicola’s phone pinged with a text from Cousin Steve. By now it must have been 1.30am. A bit late to send a courtesy message thanking us for the hospitality, surely? Indeed so. “We’ve got home,” Steve’s text informed Nicola, “and our flat is flooded. What shall we do?”

While the precise blood relation between Nicola and Steve is complex (actually, Steve being Nicola’s cousin Julie’s son, it’s not that complex, but people seem to struggle working it out), suffice to say, given the age difference, my wife is effectively Steve’s auntie. She certainly is down here in that there big bad London, at any rate. More to the point, Nicola is also, as Steve knows only too well, sensationally useful in a crisis. Hence his text. Late as it was, Nicola told Steve she’d be right there. He only lives five minutes down the road.

Obviously I can’t have my wife wandering alone on the streets of Hackney in the wee small hours, so I went along too. Frankly, given Nicola had necked a fair few proseccos, I had been hopeful of a rather more enjoyable end to the night’s festivities. But hey ho, blood is thicker than water.

What’s more, Steve having mentioned the delicious possibility of having to break into the unoccupied flat above to isolate the source of the leak, Nicola had given me the all-clear to fetch a crowbar and hammer from the garden shed. No way was I going to pass up a chance like that. Tooling up as ordered, I packed a hefty screwdriver as well, to be on the safe side.

“You’d better take charge of this lot,” I said

to Nicola, handing over my burglary kit, “otherwise I’ll more than likely get nicked on the walk down there.” For once she agreed with me.

As we arrived at Steve and Abby’s block, evidence of the inundation was plain to see. The façade of their building was dark with water, pools forming at its base, puddles seeping into the achingly trendy boutiques on the ground floor.

“We need to turn off the mains supply,” said Nicola, instantly assessing the situation. “Great idea,” I said. “Er, how do you propose to do that?”

“That manhole there,” Nicola replied, pointing at the pavement (my admiration for this woman never ceases to increase). “Can you open it?”

I may not have many skills but, prop forward as I once was, brute strength is one of the few assets I bring to the party. Seizing the crowbar, I had the relevant cover prised up in an instant. Nicola reached into the exposed hole and with a deft twist, shut off the stopcock. What a team.

Was this behaviour legal? Probs not. But as I say, given this mysterious water-based threat represented a clear and present danger to Cousin Steve and Abby’s gaff, and family always come first, I couldn’t have cared less. We rang the doorbell and proceeded inside.

Having negotiated the stairs to the third floor, huff puff – Cousin Steve might have had the decency to rent a place on the ground floor, or failing that, somewhere with a lift – I received some news that gave me a renewed burst of energy. “We’ve got the green light on busting into the upstairs flat. Shall I bring my axe?” Steve said, his tone failing to disguise a degree of excitement.

“Trust me, son,” I replied, feeling like Mr Wolf in *Pulp Fiction*. “I’ve got this covered.”

Another flight of stairs, another pause for breath, and then the fun began. It took me, the crowbar and the hammer about five minutes. No axe required. If you’ve never had the pleasure of levering open someone else’s front door, I recommend it. Provided you’ve got a cast-iron excuse, of course.

Nicola, Abby and Steve swarmed past to identify the source of the leak. At which point, frankly, my work done, I lost interest.

Steve’s landlord later told him he kept a spare key under the mat in the hallway. ■

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